

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE  
TO THE HINDU





# THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE TO THE HINDU

BEING THE DUFF MISSIONARY LECTURES  
FOR NINETEEN FORTY FIVE ON THE  
CHALLENGE OF THE GOSPEL IN INDIA

A. G. HOGG, M.A., D.LITT., D.D.

*Author of Christ's Message of the Kingdom; Redemption from this World,  
or the Supernatural in Christianity, etc.*

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## FOREWORD

THE Christian message to the Hindu must never be merely a Christianised version of Hinduism, but it does need to give to the authentic Christian faith a truly Indian form of expression. There was a day when, with the pardonable optimism of youth, the author conceived it not impossible for the foreign missionary to acquire so Indian a mentality as to become capable of taking a lead in the working out of such an expression. To-day, on the other hand, he feels that only Indian Christians themselves may hope to do that. But this does not mean that the foreigner can have no subsidiary part to play. His experience as a missionary can teach him what features of the mountain-range of Gospel truth are most apt to be missed by minds which approach it from the Hindu angle, and what features seen from that angle present a forbidding contour. And even if it be not granted him to find the most truly Indian way of sharpening the eyesight and of opening out new perspectives, and he has to leave that to the Indian Church, still his Western heritage should qualify him for helping that Church to see to it that what is presented to India is the full challenge of the ancient Christian Gospel in all its distinctiveness.

Therein lies one of the hopes which have animated the writing of this little book. In it one to whom, for some three dozen years, there was committed the privilege of seeking to declare and interpret Christ to Indian youth submits a study of a few features characteristic of the Gospel—features which are so distinctive that they need to be held in the forefront of attention if its true challenge and appeal is to be apprehended by the Hindu mind and is to constrain it to face the issue of a decisive acceptance or rejection.

There is another thought also which has cheered the labour of composition. The author is conscious that his own apprehension of the Gospel has been enriched and clarified by having to think it out afresh for himself under the stimulus of intercourse with the Hindu mind, and it will seem to him, therefore, not a

personal achievement, but only a natural consequence if some of his chapters—particularly the fifth—should turn out to contain points not destitute of suggestiveness even to the professional theologian.

The book reproduces, with only minor alterations and additions, a course of lectures delivered in 1945, in Edinburgh and Glasgow, under the Duff Missionary Lectureship Trust. The honour of thus helping to commemorate the work of that great missionary pioneer is peculiarly grateful to one whose best years have been spent in an educational institution which so early followed the lead that Duff had given, and which drew so much of its inspiration from his example. For the opportunity of participating in this recurrent commemoration the author would tender to the Trustees his cordial thanks.

A. G. HOGG.

ST. JOHN'S MANSE,  
MUTHILL, PERTHSHIRE,  
*February, 1946.*

# I

## WANTED—A CHALLENGING RELEVANCY

THE simplest way of indicating what this book is about is by use of a figure. Consider any building that deserves to be accounted a triumph of architectural art. To be fully understood and appreciated, it has to be studied from every possible angle of approach. Each of them throws new contours into relief, which delight the eye by their dignity and grace, and satisfy the mind by their revelation of the purposefulness with which the whole structure has been planned. Now, in these pages the reader is invited to study some of the contours of the Christian Gospel which strike the eye of one whose direction of approach is from the site on which a neighbouring spiritual edifice stands. That neighbouring edifice is Hinduism. He has been visiting it. It has made on him a profound impression; and with that impression vivid in his memory he has a quicker perceptiveness as he studies those structural contours of the Christian Gospel which his angle of approach throws into prominence.

What may we hope to gain by such a course of study as this simile describes? First of all something which is of moment to every Christian and not only to those commissioned to declare the Gospel to India. We stand to gain an enrichment of our own understanding of the faith once for all committed to the saints. I do not expect this enrichment of the quality of our understanding to be achieved by grafting into it ideas which are slips from a plant of another growth. I am thinking of something very different, something which perhaps I may most readily explain if I may be allowed an autobiographical reminiscence.

It was at the beginning of the year 1903 that I first landed in India, and was received at once into those intimate contacts with the enquiring mind of youth which the daily life of a professor in a missionary college can so lavishly provide. It was a fascinating experience. To be brought right up against an alien ideology—to have to reorientate one's faith, or rather (in the strict sense of

the term) to have to orientate it, to make it face towards the inherited problems of the East instead of those problems of the West which had determined its traditional alignment—that was a situation whose unescapable challenge absorbed every ounce of one's intellectual energy. It quickened into life every germinal idea one possessed. No true missionary will go out of his way to invite controversy, but the undergraduate mind loves it, especially undergraduate minds that are in frank and friendly relations with exponents of a foreign faith. And the controversial claim with which I was most frequently faced was this. Hinduism possesses, in its great doctrine of *karma* and transmigration, an accredited solution of a problem to which the Christian Church has formulated no answer—which indeed the average Christian regards as an insoluble mystery—the problem of unmerited suffering. That controversial challenge sent me to a study of Hindu thought about *karma*, or the unbreakable continuity between deeds and their fruit in the doer's experience. It sent me to a study in which I sought not merely to criticise, but to learn. Also it made me study afresh the Biblical revelation. I was not theologically so ignorant as to be unaware of how much the enigma of unmerited suffering had done to shape the development of Old Testament faith, and how relevant to it was the New Testament teaching about the Cross of Christ. But I began to see all this in a new alignment which presented me with issues more clearly cut, and deepened my understanding. I realised that while orthodox Hinduism met the seeming moral paradox of undeserved suffering by heroically cleaving to a conviction that there is, and can be, no such thing, Christianity meets it with an insight for which the paradox melts away. It is no moral enormity that the just should suffer with and for the unjust. On the contrary, that is the principle on which any moral universe ought to be built, and on which, if the Christian Gospel is true, the actual universe is built. It is a principle which reaches its consummate expression in the crucifixion of the guiltless Christ, but it runs through all of God's dealings with man. For authentic Christian faith, therefore, it is no injustice but an honour when Providence lays upon an individual a share greater than he relatively deserves in the sorrows and frustrations which are the curse that rightly dogs a sinful world. That is why the Church

has never been constrained to formulate an authoritative doctrine regarding unmerited suffering. It has not needed to do so because, for authentic Christian faith, there is here no insoluble-seeming mystery at all.

About this great subject no more need be said at this point, since it is to be the topic of a subsequent chapter. It has come up here by way of illustration only, an illustration, remembered from my own experience, of how a deepened understanding of the faith once for all committed to the saints may result from approaching its study from the angle here selected.

That is a gain which every Christian must appreciate; but the chosen angle of approach should have special interest for those whose vocation it is to proclaim the Gospel to Hindus. That is an immensely difficult task—how difficult only those who have attempted it can fully realise. In the modes of presentation adopted there must be always a challenging relevancy.

There must be challenge, for it is a unique Gospel that the Church is commissioned by its Lord to declare. But if the challenge is to be made effectively, it must be concentrated at key positions and not dissipated by being spread over every point where Christian and Hindu ways of thought diverge.

I well remember the bewilderment that fell upon me when I was making my first acquaintance with the more theistic type of Hindu religious literature. So confused a medley did the resemblances and the differences between Hindu and Christian teaching seem to constitute. The educated Hindu has the same feeling as he reads Christian books or listens to expositions of Christianity. Naturally, the Christian ideas which possess affinity with Hindu teaching, being the more intelligible to him, strike him as being the more weighty factors; and, being hereditarily predisposed to syncretism, the Hindu ends by being quite honestly of opinion that the differences are of little moment, and that in religious essentials Christianity and Hinduism are the same. That is one reason why, among the educated classes, we get so much of passive sympathy with Christian teaching and borrowing of Christian ideas, and so little of definite acceptance or definite rejection of the Christian faith. This unsatisfactory result should be much less possible if, in Christian preaching and teaching in India, there could be more of an agreed selective

emphasis. Along with willing recognition of points of affinity there should always be care taken to set in the limelight those differences which, in the preacher's own judgment, are cardinal, and constitute a determinative parting of the ways between the faith and life of the real Hindu man of God and the real Christian. The Christian witness-bearer needs habitually to give most time to a persuasive exposition of those elements of our Christian religious insight in which it is his personal conviction that Hinduism has most to learn from the faith of the Bible. This does not mean that he must needs explicitly affirm that at these points Hinduism comes short or goes astray, for any such assertion will always put the Hindu on the defensive. What is required is persuasive emphasis, not controversial claims. It is one of the aims of this book to invite the heralds of the Gospel in India to concentrate their own thought on such key positions. If just at these points they can attain special clarity of insight, they will be helped to make their message not only challenging, but relevant in its challenge.

The message needs not only to be challengingly conceived, but to be relevantly expressed. It must meet the hearer at some point where he is conscious, or can be made conscious, of a spiritual need. How indispensable this requirement is, and how baffling, is not readily understood except by those who have attempted to fulfil it.

I should like, if I may, to help the reader to realise something of its indispensableness and its difficulty, for that will quicken his sympathy with the missionaries whom the Church sends out as witness-bearers. This purpose may be furthered if every student of these pages will address himself for a moment to an effort of imagination. Let each imagine himself to be a foreign missionary set down to proclaim the Gospel in some region where orthodox Hinduism prevails and where he has to break new ground. It is important that this special kind of situation should be one feature of the imagined picture, because this will more clearly bring out the essential difficulty which the foreign missionary has always in some degree to face, the difficulty of expressing the Gospel's challenge with an immediately perceptible relevancy. In such a situation, the mind of the missionary has to travel the whole of the mental distance lying between it and the Hindu mind; he is not



helped by finding that the latter has gone part of the way to meet his mind. The case may be different in a district where missionary enterprise has been long established—different especially where missionary schools and colleges have been effectively operating. The Indian who has had years of instruction in such a school or college is no longer a typical Hindu. His outlook upon life has been modified; he has imbibed many Christian ideas; he has become uncertain or even sceptical about many Hindu doctrines. In mind and soul he has gone part of the way to meet the missionary, and so the missionary does not need to go all the way to meet him. That is an advantage which has been largely my own in my work among senior students. I have had comparatively little experience of ploughing really virgin soil. So the effort of imagination which the reader is here invited to make involves for the author also an imaginative venture.

We are supposing ourselves newly arrived at an orthodox Hindu centre as yet untouched by missionary effort, and we are mentally plotting out the lines of our first evangelistic talks. Their nature must, of course, depend partly upon the type of hearers which our preliminary exploration of the local conditions has shown us that we are most likely to secure. For an orthodox district does not mean an area throughout which the effective factors of India's common religious heritage are, for every soul, the same. In such a district, especially among the outcastes and low castes, but infiltrating into the higher castes, there will be much of a crude animism which can be paralleled by the religious beliefs to be found among all backward peoples, and which can be called Hinduism only by virtue of the thinnest veneer of nominally accepted Vedantic ideas. To the extent to which animistic beliefs are the dominant religious factor, the missionary's most relevant approach will be through holding up Jesus as the Deliverer of the devil-possessed, the puissant Healer, and the Victor over all mysterious powers of evil. For the purposes of our essay in imagination, however, it may be more useful to suppose ourselves in prospect of making contact with a section of the population that is really impregnated with the ideas and aspirations of India's characteristic religious heritage. How shall we make what shall be, to their minds, the spiritually most relevant approach?

By such people, and by their spiritual ancestors for some

twenty-five centuries and more, the practical religious question which for us takes the form, 'What must I do to be saved?' has been asked in the form, 'How shall I escape from being born again and again, in an endless succession of lives, some of them happier, some more miserable, but all of them unsatisfying, all of them held in the shackles of unreality and illusion?' Since before the days of the Buddha, who died about 480 B.C., all the schools and sects of Hindu religion have taken it for granted that there really is for man this endless chain of successive lives, and that the only salvation worth having must be one providing escape from the necessity of being reincarnated again and again for ever. The schools and sects have differed about the way of escape and about other matters of theory and practice; but they have all agreed about the fact of endless repeated birth, and they are all one in feeling that anything worth calling 'salvation' must promise escape from this endless repetition of embodied existence and attainment of union with the peaceful Absolute.

Now suppose that, all unrecking of this circumstance, you were to begin your Christian preaching by telling, as you would in your homeland, of a salvation wrought for man through Christ. As soon as your hearers discover that you are *not* talking about a way of escape from a law of endless reincarnation, may they not at once lose any religious interest which they may have felt in listening to you? May they not feel that you have no message for them—no message about what, deep down in their hearts, they regard as the one thing needful? Yet if so, what is to be done? Are you to change your missionary practice? Are you to put off telling about salvation through Christ, and to begin instead by assuring your hearers that there is no such thing as an endless chain of repeated births? But why should they believe you? Why should they take your word, the word of a mere foreigner, against the word of their own great saints and sages handed down through thousands of years? Can you prove to them that they will not be reincarnated? That would be rather difficult. Or will you challenge them to prove to you that the belief in transmigration is true? At once they would begin to offer you arguments in its support, and you would find yourself involved in an intellectual wrangle which would banish the religious atmosphere needed for real preaching.

Such methods will not do. They amount to an effort to make

Hindu minds travel the distance to the preacher's mind, instead of making his mind travel the distance to theirs. That may be possible to some extent in an educational institution with its long-continued contacts, but it cannot be the preacher's method. In this difficulty has the great Master-Missionary left any example for our instruction? By the 'Master-Missionary' there is here meant one even greater than the Apostle Paul. A master craftsman in the missionary art Paul certainly was; for in some thirty years of witness-bearing and of teaching he accomplished a missionary achievement which was then, and has never ceased to be, of a decisiveness unparalleled by the work of any other servant of our Lord. But there was a foreign missionary even more efficient than the Apostle to the Gentiles. There was Jesus, the Son of God. His ministry of preaching, and of teaching by word and deed, may have covered not half as many months as St. Paul's did years. Yet within the narrow compass of those months He not only stamped upon the mind of man an impress which has never been effaced, but started a self-propagating movement which, having demonstrated its ineradicableness time and again, now bids fair very soon to have made itself endemic in every corner of the earth. Has this Master-Missionary set any example for us in the technique of making approach to minds of an alien heritage?

It is more than a freakish play of fancy to describe Jesus as a foreign missionary. It is true that when, in the high counsels of heaven, He was designated for the work of a heavenly missionary to earth-dwellers, it was possible to let Him be born and grow up a Jew. Thus He was prepared for His task by a process of indigenisation, or mental and spiritual naturalisation, far more thorough than any modern school of missionary training can provide. Nevertheless, between the thoughts and standards and spiritual outlook of Jesus and of those to whom He was sent there remained a contrast which created for Him the same kind of difficulty that dogs the steps of a missionary to an alien land. He landed on the terrestrial shores the lonely possessor of a spiritual privilege which He was eager to share with as many as would receive it. Was it not so with every pioneer foreign missionary? Like the foreign missionary He was the bearer of a revelation and a summons which, as He concernedly foresaw (Matt. x. 35, 36), must be

socially disruptive in its working. And in the prosecution of His commission He had to face, in its acutest form, the typical foreign missionary problem of conveying eternal and absolute truth in a thought-form familiar to hearers of a particular period with a particular religious and cultural inheritance—a thought-form which provided for it no thoroughly apposite vehicles of expression.

Take, for example, the contemporary thought-form which least imperfectly fitted His own personal consciousness of the mystery of His own being and His transcendent mission—the concept of the Messiah or the Messiah-designate. How cautious He had to be about the use of that conception! It was misleading and utterly inadequate unless united with the concept of the Suffering Servant of Jahveh; and where was the Jew who had ever dreamed of such a combination or was spiritually ready to comprehend it? Or take the related idea of the Kingdom or Reign of God, popularly conceived of as an 'age to come,' a temporal reality with a date of arrival. In its deepest significance the idea of the Messianic Age or the Kingdom of God included the idea of a fulfilment of all right longing, the idea of the transcendently good, the idea of God's bestowal on man of what is supremely the Best for man. But when does that Best arrive? It does not comport with time's calendar. If we insist on attaching to it a date, the true dating is at once 'now,' and 'presently,' and 'far ahead' according as we are thinking of what is supremely good for man as man now is, or for man as man will be when he has attained an imaginable degree of improved fitness, or for man as man will be when he has attained an unimaginable perfection of readiness. Even heaven itself, it would seem, can never be heaven unless it has a richer heaven within its range of endeavour. For how could a true child of God find any life heavenly which did not afford opportunity for expressing his love in activity directed to richer achievement? We need hardly wonder, then, that when our Lord used time-forms in His talk about the Kingdom of God, there was room for so much variety in the implied dating of its advent.

These instances show clearly that for the Master-Missionary, in spite of the fact that it was His own countrymen that He was addressing, there was the same difficulty which besets the preaching of the foreign missionary of modern times. He was the

only son of man who ever had or has enjoyed a perfect oneness with the Heavenly Father and a complete understanding of God's mind towards man. The revelation which He had in Him to impart was one which was to stand the test of all time. And yet if He was to convey that revelation in words which would even begin to get across to the mind of His age, He had to employ ideas which were familiar and accepted, and by means of them He had to get home a message which would interest and instruct and help the men of His generation by meeting them just where their spirits stood. In the main our Lord had to rely on living out the revelation; it could not be perfectly expressed in the thought-language of His day or even of our day. Only by being like the Heavenly Father could He adequately reveal the Heavenly Father. But words and ideas had their part to play, and there He had to fall back on the ideas of His generation. Which of these was He to choose? And among them was there any idea by relating His message to which He could, from the very outset, win eager attention and stimulate a practical response?

The first chapter of St. Mark preserves the remembered purport of Christ's inaugural teaching. It describes the line of approach which He selected when, with the Baptist's removal from the public stage, He entered upon an independent campaign. It had, as it were, to serve as an Overture to the spiritual Oratorio of His complete teaching. The Overture was this: 'The time is fully come, and the Reign of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news.' We of to-day, with nineteen centuries of Christian experience and thought behind us, are not unjustified in believing that we have some grasp of the essentials of the Christian Gospel. Yet how many of us, at setting forth to proclaim it, would dream of beginning our preaching in the way that Christ began His? Truth to tell, we find His way of beginning puzzling rather than helpful. Nevertheless, our Lord deliberately chose that form of words. He chose it for the sake of its challenging relevancy.

The arrestingness of its relevancy one may easily realise. The Messianic hope was a live issue toward which every Jew had some kind of practical attitude. All were agreed that the era in which they were or had been living was an age in which, for mysterious and probably disciplinary reasons, God held Himself strangely

aloof, and allowed a perplexingly free hand to the powers of wickedness. Every one looked forward to an 'age to come' in which all this would be reversed. And for every one the anticipated blessings of the age to come were partly religious, partly secular. So far all were agreed, but there agreement ended. There were those for whom spiritual blessedness was the most vital part of the Messianic hope, and there were those whose thoughts centred on the more worldly benefits. There were those who so groaned under political and social and economic oppression that they could hardly bear to wait, and were ready to rush to arms in support of any promising pretender to a Messianic vocation; and there were those who, like the Sadducees, were making a pretty good thing for themselves of the present evil age, and so were willing to wait and were acutely anxious lest the *status quo* be prematurely upset by abortive insurrectionary schemes. There were those for whose thought the Messianic age meant a supernatural world-crisis which only God could bring to pass, and about which men could do nothing but eagerly scan the signs of the times. There were those who, like the Pharisees, also thought of the Messianic age as a Divine interposition, but believed it could be hastened by simply doing better what they had been doing all along—that it might be earned by a perfect keeping of the Mosaic Law. And finally there were those who believed the Baptist's message that the Messianic age of a supernatural Divine intervention was at hand, but that it was to be prepared for by a revolutionary act, by a revolution not political, but moral, by radical repentance and reformation.

Into this confused welter of opinions and practical attitudes our Lord flung His own declaration of faith. It went right to the point: it was supremely relevant; but did it truly represent what He stood for, or was it a little misleading, an accommodation to the popular mind? In effect it declared: John Baptist is right; the hour has struck, the Reign of God is at hand, and what is called for is a revolution in the soul and not an insurrection in the body politic. Was that our Lord's real mind? Did it strike the true keynote for what He was afterwards more fully to teach? I am persuaded that it did. Let us consider.

What was the very heart of our Lord's subsequent teaching? Was it not this—that God was, and always had been, the

Heavenly Father, intimately accessible, eager to help and waiting only for His children's trustful appeal, waiting only for faith and the obedience that springs from faith? Now, if that was our Lord's supreme message, believed in by Him with all His heart, then there was one of the accepted ideas of His generation that was in His eyes a damnable heresy; and this was that the sorrowful present was a God-forsaken age, an age when God was standing aloof and hard of access. Was Jesus, then, to begin by directly assailing this deeply rooted idea? Was He to say to the people: your theology is all wrong? That would have been bad missionary tactics, fruitful of controversy, but not fruitful of spiritual impression. No, the wise tactics were positive, not negative. Amongst the current popular beliefs there was one which might be bent to His purpose. This was the idea, depicted in prophecy and apocalypse, of a 'Day of Jahveh,' 'the Last Days,' 'the End of the Times,' the period of crisis (it might be short, it might be longer) when against the dæmonic powers of 'the present age' there would be released all the reserves of Omnipotence. For Christ's purpose that current idea needed some bending, since imagination had been lavished on this expected interim as a time of cataclysm and prodigy. It was safer for Him, therefore, to avoid use of the customary terminology. But whatever extravagances prophecy or apocalypse had attached to its portrayal, the essence of the idea of the day of Jahveh was expectancy of a time when, although the accomplished Reign of God would still be future, the world's God-forsakenness would be at an end. In that day God would have mobilised all the heavenly hosts whom He proposed to employ to establish His perfect Reign, and He would no longer be aloof but at hand, no longer difficult of approach but ready to answer the cry of human need. On this idea our Lord seized and pressed it into His service. In effect He declared, that Day is to-day. It is now. That is what He meant by proclaiming: 'The time is fulfilled.' That too was the implication of the words, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand.' For if the perfect Reign of God was 'at hand,' then *already* God must have sent out the muster-call to His heavenly hosts, and *already* He must be willing to interpose and to act redeemingly.

God near and accessible. The conquering, redeeming might of God available. All this a certainty because His nature is love and



His zeal to rescue unsleeping. That was the heart of our Lord's inaugural message. If, instead of putting it in the terms He used, Christ had simply proclaimed that God was a loving Father, the people might have replied, Oh, yes, of course we have long believed that teaching. But when He challenged those who piously accepted that description of God to take it in earnest by believing that He was, then and there, as redemptively present and active as they had been expecting Him to become when the predicted Day of the Lord should arrive, that was a different story; that was something new and arresting. By its relevance to the people's dearest hopes and present discontents, a message thus introduced secured a startled and enquiring attention.

Such was the way in which the Master-Missionary solved, for the conditions of His own time, the missionary problem of 'the sympathetic approach.' But every use of the sympathetic approach has its aftermath. It has its aftermath just because of its success, just because it arouses attentive, enquiring thoughtfulness. For, to ruminate about a novel idea means taking it into the context of the ideas with which the mind is already furnished, and explicating and developing it by their aid. And under this treatment the novel idea is apt to have its edges blunted, and to be shaped into something more congruous with the recipient's general outlook than with the intention of the original proponent of the novel idea. So the sympathetic approach is only what its name indicates. It is only approach; and when, by means of the approach, minds have really met, the business of their meeting is challenge. All readers of the Gospels know how full of challenge was the Master-Missionary's teaching. No discerning mind fails to note how sharp was the biting-edge of His parables and pithy sayings. Both in His approach, and in His use of the approach effected, the Master-Missionary set a peerless example.

With this object-lesson to stimulate our thinking, we may now resume the exercise in imagination in which readers were invited, earlier in this chapter, to join with the author. Each was to try to think himself into the situation of a missionary who had been sent to preach in a Hindu district not previously touched by the Christian missionary enterprise. He was to picture himself mentally casting around for some way of expressing the Gospel



message which would be, for minds steeped in Hindu orthodoxy, as relevant and as arresting as Christ's was for the Jews of His day.

The difficulty, as our imaginations envisaged it, was this: Traditionally rooted in the mind of the orthodox Hindu is the conviction that, unless a way of salvation can be found, he is condemned to an endless process of reincarnation—an indefinitely continuing chain of lives, all of them unsatisfying and cursed with the falsity of illusion. It is from this dreary prospect that the orthodox Hindu seeks to be rescued. That is what he understands by salvation. It would be useless for you to begin your preaching by asserting that he stands in no such danger, and that the whole idea of an endless chain of lives is a myth. For he would not believe you; and the assertion would only provoke a mood of controversy that is fatal to the purpose of the preacher. But if, on the other hand, you simply ignore the entire subject and proclaim the Gospel in the manner you would follow in your homeland, will not your Hindu listeners feel that you have no message for them, since your thought seems never to have come to terms with that ultimate moral necessity which haunts their consciousness—the ultimate moral necessity whereby the wages of action is reincarnation?

Such was the practical difficulty with which, in our venture of imagination, we found ourselves bafflingly confronted. But now suppose that, as the pictured searching for a line of approach goes on, there comes a sudden lightening of the tension. There flash upon the memory those words of the Fourth Gospel: 'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' The words speak of a blessedness to which Time's calendar is irrelevant, a 'Now' which is fruition already, and is also unending. And while your attention is held fast by those remembered words, there floats into your field of imagination a vision of yourself standing before your expected audience and arresting their interest by saying: 'I know a secret which keeps it from mattering to me how many embodied lives I may have to live. I know how to escape right away from the illusion of being an independent entity, a self un-united with God. I know how it is possible, while still clothed in a "gross body," to be so one with God that, even if I have to live another

100,000 lives, I shall never get disgusted with life or tired of living.'

The vision holds you, but then it begins to fade. Imagination is jostled into the background by the reasoning faculty with its cold analysis. Have you really solved, you ask yourself, the problem of the sympathetic approach? Have you achieved a challenging relevancy? Part of the answer is self-evident. Your imagined line of approach is unquestionably relevant. Whatever else your hearers will be thinking, at least they will admit that you have been talking to the point. They will recognise that whether your words were true or false, at any rate they were a proffered Gospel, a genuinely religious message dealing with the Hindu soul's age-long haunting dread. But has this relevancy of your line of approach been purchased perhaps at too high a cost? May it possibly handicap your presentation of the full challenge of the Gospel? The line of approach which our Lord selected was one which, for His generation, took men to the very heart of His fuller message. Can the same be claimed for your imagined line of approach to the Hindu? It may prove instructive to consider this, even though we are dealing with only an imaginary venture in preaching.

You have supposed yourself to begin your evangelistic address by saying: 'I know how it is possible, while still clothed in a "gross body," to be so one with God that, even if I have to live another 100,000 lives, I shall never get disgusted with life or tired of living.' By this introduction you may seem to have bypassed any need for preliminary controversy. You have avoided challenging the belief in reincarnation, indefinitely repeated. Instead, you have gone straight to something positive, to the offer of 'joy and peace in believing.' And it may look as though, in going straight to this positive offer, you were going straight to the heart of the Gospel. For surely it is of the very essence of our Christian faith that it is able to banish all disgust with life, to transfigure pain, and to render the most fettered existence joyful. But stay! Have you really solved your problem? May not your self-gratulation be a trifle hasty? You have made a claim which, if it is true, is directly relevant to the Hindu's conscious need. You have claimed to possess a secret which can banish all disgust with finite life, no matter how often finite life may have to be repeated.

But is the claim true? Would your fellowship with God continue to bring you 'joy and peace in believing,' and to transfigure for you the drabbest kind of existence, if you thought Him the kind of God who could intend for you 100,000 lives of the sort that the orthodox Hindu believes in—lives which have, as their reason for occurrence, only the punishing of your bad deeds and the rewarding of your good deeds? St. Paul was willing to 'abide in the flesh'—yes, and one feels sure he would have been willing to be reincarnated for other spells of earthly life—if that would mean for him 'fruitful work' (Phil. i. 22), fellowship with his Lord in serving His Kingdom by forwarding the progress of his converts. But would there have been for him any 'strait betwixt the two,' had earthly life held for him no other *raison d'être* than good conduct prizes and bad conduct penalties? The question is answered as soon as asked. Earthly life must have an inspiring meaning and purpose in order to be tolerable to the spiritually minded. Any claim of yours to be possessor of a secret which banishes the typically Hindu world-weariness is true and honest only when it is made plain that your secret entails a rejection of the belief in a transmigration that is founded in, and perpetuated by, *karma*. Your imagined opening for an evangelistic address may seem to have evaded controversy, but in fact it has gained no more than a momentary postponement.

This is not, however, the only criticism that suggests itself. There is a second which, if less obvious, is possibly even more fundamental. Your imagined line of approach lies in some danger of being a Christianising of Hinduism instead of an Indian way of expressing Christianity. For it entails the risk of appearing to sanction the individualism of Hindu conceptions of salvation.

It may seem strange to accuse of excessive individualism a religious system so corporate or communally-minded as Hinduism. Essentially it is a social order, cemented by a religious cultus and claiming a religious sanction and authority. How firm is its communal hold on the individual Hindu is made painfully manifest whenever a Christian convert contemplates baptism. Nevertheless, possibly by way of reaction against the cramping of individuality by the caste-system and the system of the Joint Family, the most typical flowers of personal religion which spring up in the seed-bed of the Hindu religious and social order are

individualistic. Its ways of salvation are essentially ways to the salvation of the individual soul in its solitariness. It has been remarked that from the finely spiritual prayers to be found in Hindu religious literature one note is conspicuous by its absence, the note of intercession. Hindu doctrines of a way of salvation betray no recognition that the corporate social order needs a revolutionary transformation, no consuming interest in a universal reign of God. Now the same may be said of our imagined line of relevant approach to a Hindu audience: 'I know a secret which keeps it from mattering *to me* how many embodied lives *I* may have to live.' It speaks of a change in me, and mattering to me, while the cycle of reincarnation rolls on with unchanged retributive necessity. There is no announcement of a great Divine event to which the whole creation moves; there is no promise of new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In honesty, of course, one must frankly admit that even within Christendom revivalist preaching has tended to be too individualistically conceived. It has been apt to aim too exclusively at inducing the one agonised question: 'What must I do to be saved?' But to be thus preoccupied is to fall short of authentic Christianity. If my own salvation is not more important to God than the salvation of other people, it ought not to feel more important to me. Is it not a suggestive fact that when the Philippian jailer made his terrified enquiry about salvation for himself, the reply of Paul and Silas, with unconscious instinctiveness, spoke of salvation for him *and his house*? There was no individualism in the line of relevant approach chosen by the Master-Missionary. And there was no individualism, but on the contrary the completest possible negation of self-centredness, in His declaration of what ought to be the Christian soul's absorbing pre-occupation. What the Christian must seek first is not even his personal sanctification but 'the Kingdom of God and *His* righteousness,' that is, God's victorious reign over the whole earth and its ways, together with the resultant vindication against human mistrustful doubts of His zeal for all that is right and good.<sup>1</sup> The same note is struck in the Lord's Prayer, where first priority is given, although in the reverse order of mention, to the same two inter-related aspects of the Christian's primary desire, the hallowing of God's name

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 33, for the true sense of which compare, e.g., Isa. xlv. 13; li. 5.

(or vindication of His character) and the coming of His Kingdom. This God-centred release from individualism is exemplified very finely, even if somewhat quaintly, in a reminiscence of Brother Lawrence's. He has described how, from the long-standing misery of a fear that he was spiritually 'lost,' he had won relief by reasoning thus with himself about it. He said to himself: 'I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God, and I have endeavoured to act only for Him; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God.' Turning resolutely away in this manner from all concern about his own personal destiny, Brother Lawrence found himself living his subsequent life 'in perfect liberty and continual joy.' We may doubtless be intrigued by the theology of which Brother Lawrence's reasoning gives us a passing glimpse. We may allow ourselves a gentle smile at his apparent belief that a soul which loved God and acted only for Him could possibly be a 'lost' soul. But at any rate we must admit that his way of banishing his trouble of mind was authentically Christian. He banished it by ceasing from all self-centred care about his own salvation and rejoicing only in the privilege of loving and serving God.

It seems a far cry from this to the spirit of our imagined way of relevant approach to an orthodox Hindu audience. Is the spiritual distance so great as to require us to reject that imagined line of approach as unhelpful, or even dangerously misleading? That is a misgiving which I am content to have raised, but which I do not propose to examine. To discuss it further would be to treat far too seriously what has been adduced merely as an imagined expedient of an imagined preacher to an imagined audience. Our little essay in imagination will have served its purpose if it has done two things. It will have been useful, first, if it contributes to a sympathetic understanding of how necessary and how difficult it is for the foreign missionary to find a relevant line of approach, and, second, if it has suggested that, as a qualification for choosing wisely between possible lines of approach, there is need for a lively apprehension of the full spiritual challenge which the Gospel makes to India.

It is not with the lines of approach but with the ultimate challenge that this book attempts to deal. In the early years of

my missionary life I used to dream that there might be found some superlatively apt line of approach. Might there not exist, I asked myself, some one theological issue where Christian and Hindu thought not only meet one and the same soul-problem with divergent solutions, but meet it with solutions the divergency of which is determinative of all their other divergencies? If such an issue could be found, it should light the preacher's road to a discovery of supremely relevant lines of sympathetic approach. With the passing of the years, however, that dream of mine has faded. For its possibility Hinduism would need to be more of an intellectual unity than it is or ever has been. Also what, earlier in this lecture, I allowed myself to call Hindu orthodoxy has at least entered on the road to becoming a thing of the past, and the working missionary has to arrest the attention of minds which vary greatly in religious standpoint. 'Modern Hinduism,' as has been remarked by Dr. P. D. Devānandam, 'is making claims on life that cannot be supplied by anything in Hinduism itself,' and under the influence of a new puzzlement as to the meaning of history Hindu thinkers are 're-casting their ancient stress on Karma in terms of God's will.'<sup>1</sup> If such be the case, a situation so fluid calls for a readiness to use, with different hearers, different avenues of approach. All the more need, then, for a standard by which to judge whether a conceived method of presentation has merely the meretricious value of catching a momentary attention, or is really capable of conducting the hearer to the heart of the Christian Gospel. To possess such a standard it is necessary to be alertly conscious of the points where that Gospel challenges Hindu religious conceptions most radically or fundamentally. It is in the hope of directing attention to some of these key-positions, and clarifying thought about them, that this book has been written, and to that endeavour the chapters which follow are directed.

<sup>1</sup> See the article entitled 'Whither Theology in India?' in the *International Review of Missions*, April, 1944.



## II

### COME, FOLLOW ME

**I**N the city of Madras there is a particularly fine school, founded and run by the Ramakrishna Mission. The pupils of this institution, whether of high caste or low, are taught to use their hands as well as their heads, and as part of their practical training they are required to discharge between them every one of the tasks, except the scavenger's, that are involved in keeping the school buildings and grounds clean and tidy. In entering the field of educational work this vitally Hindu mission may or may not have been consciously taking a leaf out of the book of Christian missionary strategy, but in any case there is here much more than mere imitation. Achievement in character-building has been so marked that the Principal of a Missionary College has been heard to confess himself ready, in selecting from among applicants for admission, to accept without further enquiry any youth who had been brought up in the Madras school of the Ramakrishna Mission. Pervading this institution there is (or was in the days of the author's acquaintance with it) a devotional religious atmosphere of the finest Hindu type. And typical of this was a room to which the attention of any visitor was certain to be invited. Its special feature was that round its walls there were ranged, for a reverent regard rising to adoration, pictures or figures of saints or prophets of all the principal religions, and among them one of Jesus Christ.

Will the reader let his imagination conjure up for him a vision of that room? He need not fear his imagined presence there to be an intrusion if his soul can respond to the spirituality of its religious atmosphere. No visitor is an intruder if, as he remembers how these saints and prophets have severally helped to make God real for men, he gives thanks and praise to the Heavenly Father for His age-long endeavour to reveal Himself. And even if amongst that galaxy of witnesses to the Divine, there is one whom his soul counts pre-eminent, still need not his imagined presence destroy the harmony of the picture. A pre-eminence is,



by the members of that Mission, assigned to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa; yet a visitor will not offend them if his own faith accords it to Jesus Christ. But, however courteously he may be welcomed, his will be an alien presence if the pre-eminence he accords to Jesus Christ is more than a pre-eminence of degree. In that room which the reader's fancy is picturing in far-away Madras he will be spiritually an intruder if it lies upon his soul and conscience to proclaim Christ's pre-eminence as absolute.

Here we strike the most decisive of the partings of the way between Christian and Hindu faith. Of all the contours which distinguish the Gospel edifice from every other spiritual habitation the most determinative is the absolute Lordship of Christ. Christianity is the inward revolution that is wrought in the man who has been constrained to put adoring trust in Jesus as *the* one Leader under whom there is any ultimate hope either for humanity or for himself—to put adoring trust in that Leader *because of* the Man He was and *because of* what He said and did. The uniqueness of Christianity derives from the uniqueness of Jesus. His command is 'Follow Me,' and this 'following' involves an absoluteness of surrender which St. Paul loved to describe as being Christ's bond-slave—*willingly* His slave, but still His *slave*. Now our Lord has Himself reminded us that 'no man can be the slave of two masters' (Matt. vi. 24). One cannot simultaneously follow Christ (in the sense demanded) and follow Confucius or the Buddha or Muhammad or Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. To follow Christ is to enter upon a life-journey which is as *sui generis* as is the Master who directs its course and determines its experiences. No matter how striking may be the spiritual resemblances that are discoverable between what is authentically Hindu and what is authentically Christian, there remains an irreducible surd of difference. In the realm of doctrine it is astonishing how many of what one is accustomed to regard as characteristically Christian conceptions have their analogues in Hindu religious literature. But all doctrinal similarities pale in significance when set against this contrast, that the Hindu does not confess, as rightfully absolute Lord and only Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth.

What has just been said is, it should be noted, an assertion of *difference*, not an assertion of *superiority*. The point emphasised, so



far, is simply that, as a religion, Christianity is *sui generis*; which is to say that when one confines attention to features which it has in common with other religions, or even with any one other religion, inevitably one is missing its most crucial characteristic. But this assertion of *difference* passes very easily into a claim of *superiority*. It easily does so for this reason, that the Christian is, as was remarked above, the man who is constrained to put adoring trust in Jesus as *the* one Leader under whom there is any ultimate hope either for humanity or for himself. So the Christian does inevitably make affirmation regarding a superiority. But a superiority of what or whom? A superiority not of his own faith but of its object, not of himself but of his Lord.

For the heralds of the Gospel in India this is a distinction to be kept in mind. As heralds we cannot help voicing a challenge; this is no more than our duty. But if we wish the challenge to be effective, we must see that it always takes issue at the right point. And that point is not the comparative worth of Christianity as a historically existing religion but is the glory of the Christian's Lord. As Christians, we are certain that Christ is the supreme revelation of God; and if that conviction is true, then the finest flowers of the spiritual life ought to be those which have grown in the garden of the Christian faith. The case ought to have been so, but it may not have been at all universally so in fact; and it is not our calling, as Gospel heralds, to assert that it has been so. What, as Christians, we cannot help feeling inwardly certain of is something different; it is that in the garden of the Lord Jesus the soil is so rich that if, outside it, there be plants which have flowered to surpassing loveliness, a transplanting could empower them to an even more perfect flowering. It is through our inward certainty of this that we escape the fear of acting presumptuously when we venture to offer the Gospel to saintly souls which, although without Christ, are manifestly leading a life that is hid in God—possibly more deeply hid in God than our own. A poor man may sometimes give a gift to a rich man. To do this he does not need to be richer than the rich man. He needs only to possess something—it may be a treasured heirloom—which the rich man does not possess. Let us make offer of our gift, the vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and let us leave it, as far as may be, to the Hindu himself to assess the worth of the life

which that vision inspires as compared with what may be otherwise attained. In any case he will accept no assessment but his own; and rightly so, for only he to whom God has drawn near through Hinduism can tell how far within 'the secret of His tabernacle' God may set one whose thoughts and forms of worship are still Hindu.

The words I have just used imply that I do not see eye to eye with those who have looked for a sympathetic line of missionary approach in the conception that Christianity is the *finding* of that for which Hinduism has been only the *seeking*. Hindu faith has known of a finding as well as a seeking. Moreover, if there is within Christianity a finding which Hindu faith has not experienced, has not this been, in part, because what has been sought for is *not* the same? As Rudolf Otto has said, 'the religion of India turns upon an altogether different axis from the religion of the Bible,' so that 'the two cannot be regarded as "preparation" and "fulfilment."'

The kind of offence that may be given by suggesting that Hinduism has been only a seeking of God, whereas in Christianity there is a finding, may be illustrated by an editorial which appeared some years ago in the periodical, *Prabuddha Bhārata*, and of part of which I have come across a summary. The editor observed that when a missionary publishes a book wherein he brings together the confessions of Hindus who are 'fully conscious of the immense difficulties of God-realisation,' and when such a missionary adds the remark that Hindus have not found the truth whereas many Christians affirm that they have, what is to be said is that the author of that book has not known what seeing God and realising God means to the Hindu—'what a rare experience it is, and after what struggle one can get a glimpse of the Eternal. The Hindu feels his ideal to be so high that when any one asks him if he has realised God, he only makes a negative answer.' God-realisation—so the editorial goes on to explain—is such an absolute transformation of the whole life that when we are in contact with one who has this realisation, we feel we are in the presence of the great Sovereign Reality now shining around him and through him. There is always an air of super-humanity about him. Our mind in his presence becomes calm of itself without any effort on our part, and a new peace and joy

dawns on us. This is one sure sign. There is another sign which is more significant, namely, that in this state of God-realisation the relative life of mortality is literally dead. And this state is called *Samadhi*. Even now and here the life of immortality has already begun in all its reality, though to all appearance the person is yet continuing in the body. No man is truly spiritual unless he has realised this *Samadhi* and this immortal life.<sup>1</sup>

Although the controversial motive of this editorial is evident, it points the finger correctly at what has been a typical quest of the Hindu religious spirit. Typically it has longed and sought to see God, to win and maintain a vividly immediate and engrossing realisation of the Divine Being. The following is related of Swami Vivekānanda. When about seventeen years old, he was 'stirred by an irrepressible urge to search and find God. One day he approached Devendranath Tagore<sup>2</sup> and eagerly asked him, "Have you seen God?" He received no satisfying answer, and his restlessness increased. At this time he heard that Sri Ramakrishna was to be found in the house of one of his disciples in Calcutta; and he went over there and asked Paramahansa the question he had put to other saints—"Have you seen God?" The reply was, "I see Him as I see you, only far more intensely." "Can you make me see Him?" "Yes, I can, but come to me alone."<sup>3</sup> This longing for an untrammelled vision has not only been characteristic of the more famous Hindu mystics but can strike a responsive chord in all devout Indian souls. One of my own personal friends, Mr. Mark Sanjiva Rau, a Brahmin convert who has done fine missionary work under the Basel Mission, has put on record a touching reminiscence of a conversation with his mother immediately after his baptism. 'Mother asked, "Child, why did you do this? What happened?" And I replied, "God Himself laid hold of me and took me away—I could not resist Him—I had to yield." Immediately mother asked the question—"Did you see God?" I replied, "No—but, mother, have you ever seen me, or have I ever seen you? You have seen this body wherein I dwell; but the 'I' who speaks with this mouth, who sees with

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 49 f. of Mr. Mark Sanjiva Rau's *Types of Religious Consciousness, Hindu and Christian*, Basel Mission and Tract Depository, Mangalore, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> The father of the famous Bengali poet.

<sup>3</sup> See Sanjiva Rau, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

these eyes, you have not seen at all, cannot see at all. That physical body of yours which I see, that alone is not you. You that love me, you that have agonized and cried on my behalf, I cannot see. You and I, though unseen each to the other, yet are very real, very living in our mutual relations which are very intimate. So also, though we cannot see God with these eyes of flesh, God is very real and living to us, and we can have intimate relations with Him."<sup>1</sup>

In the spontaneity of that Hindu mother's test-question—'Did you see God?' was there not something very revealing? Her little world had fallen about her ears, for her son's baptism meant for her family inward disruption and public disgrace. But it seemed to mean also something personally more torturing. It seemed to mean also treacherous filial disloyalty *unless* her son had so acted because there had come to him what she herself had wistfully longed for and what must take precedence of all else—unless there had come to him a direct vision of God. If that had happened, then her son might perhaps have done right to follow whither the vision led. So she put her question.

Hardly less significant was the son's reply. It could not be a simple affirmative because, although there had been a convincing reality in the way God had met him, the path his footsteps had trodden to that meeting had not been the mystic's path, and what he had been granted had not been a 'seeing' of God, but something more intimate and not less self-authenticating.

By those Hindu saints who have testified that their seeking has become a finding, the realisation of God which has come to them has been felt as self-authenticating. They *know* that they have met God, and the vision prostrates them in adoration and fills them with rapture. It is no part of our Christian duty to deny the actuality of that meeting, for the only cloud that is quite impervious to the radiance of the Divine Presence is insincerity, not doctrinal error. But we do know that in that real meeting they have missed something, something which we have found to be so vital and so precious that our hearts cannot rest until they share it with us. Whatever of the Divine Reality they may have beheld more overwhelmingly than many of us have done, it has not been granted them to recognise in Jesus 'The Word made flesh,' and

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 28.

through His crucifixion to feel the utter devastatingness of God's judgment upon guilt and sin, and in His resurrection to know themselves claimed for a Cause in the following of an invincible Leader.

Like the Apostle Paul, therefore, who was burdened with a debt to discharge 'both to the Greeks and the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise,' we have a witness to bear to saintly souls whom, through their Hindu heritage, God has drawn far into His life-transforming presence as well as to hungering souls who have not found that which they have been seeking. What even the finders have missed we know to be treasure incalculable. And it is treasure hid in a field which the feet of India's saints have been little wont to tread.

It has been characteristic of reflective India to seek salvation by turning away from the concrete and temporal to contemplation of the abstract and timeless. For the Hebrews, on the other hand, as Professor Dodd has said,<sup>1</sup> 'movement in time, that is to say history, is the field of reality, and God is the living God whose mighty acts make history.' Now it was through this Hebraic appraisal of the moral and religious significance of history that the great discovery of God in Christ was originally mediated. Against the background of a national history that was apprehended as brimful of Divine purpose there came upon the scene a Personality and a life-work which could evoke religious awe and devotion. In a personally unique human being who, in face of a situation that was both politically and religiously critical, became seized of a transcendent vocation, God was able so fully to express His very Self that responsive souls were driven, first, to treat Jesus unself-consciously as it would be impious to treat any other than 'very God,' and finally to conceptualise this their spontaneous reaction in a Trinitarian creed. In such a human Person, addressed to such a vocation, and set against such a historical background, there became actual a life in which men could know themselves meeting God face to face. Because under these conditions this miracle of Incarnation was wrought, we know that such a miracle was possible. Whether it would have been possible in any different setting we have no means of knowing.

To any full doctrine of Incarnation a moral reading of history is

<sup>1</sup> *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 16.

vital. The sublunary realm of human endeavour and historical occurrence cannot afford a stage upon which we may, without irreverence, conceive of God Himself as personally present and active, unless 'righteousness' is the objective which His intervention pursues. The only good of which even the Divine Majesty can be a servant is Good Absolute, and the Kantian philosophy has rightly taught us that moral goodness, or 'the good will,' is the single form in which good absolute comes within the range of sublunary human experience. Goodness is not, by itself, the *summum bonum*; it is not the sum total of absolute good. Yet, as compared with any other sublunary good that is known to us or imaginable by us, it is not merely superior but 'supreme.' Now from this it must follow that the only way in which the human mind can, without impairing the infinity of Godhead, interpret developments in the realm of the concrete and historical as the activity of God is when we conceive Him as impelled to this activity by His passion for 'righteousness.' The great prophets led Hebrew thought along this path, but the Hindu mind has never made 'righteousness' or 'holiness' central to its conception of God. That attribute is conspicuous by its absence from the famous phrase which expresses the nearest Upanishadic approach to a definition of the indefinable Absolute, the phrase, *sacchit-ānanda Brahma*, or 'Brahman is reality, intelligence and bliss.' This failure to make central a Divine passion for righteousness may help to explain the fact that even when, in the great Epics, Indian thought adventures on a religious interpretation of historical, or supposedly historical, events and personages, it never gets beyond the conception of the mere *avatār*. It is no accidental circumstance that when to the purely human hero of the original *Rāmāyana* Divine attributes were accorded by the addition to the Epic of its first and last Books, Rāma was represented as an incarnation of only half of the essence of Viṣṇu. And still more significant in the present connection, although in a different way, was the transformation undergone by Kṛishṇa, when the story of the *Mahābhārata* was expanded by the incorporation of that great interlude, the *Bhagavadgītā*. The deification accorded to Kṛishṇa in that 'Song of the Adorable' is not partial but complete. He is conceived both as the absolute Brahman, the supreme object of meditation, and as a personal deity who may

be approached by prayers and sacrifices. Nevertheless there is no real parallel between this and the Christian idea of Incarnation. For this deification the distinctive personality of Kṛishṇa does not matter. In the legends which elsewhere cluster round his name there may be vivid portraiture but not so in the Gītā itself. There he is little more than a lay figure on which the robes of almightiness are draped; and when he chooses to reveal his absoluteness, he does so by displaying to Arjuna's bewildered senses the myriad forms (equally revealing or equally unrevealing) which he can at will adopt. Far different is the Incarnation in Jesus. There the distinctive personality of the Incarnate One is all-important, for the object of our adoration is not, as a Hindu might say, 'the God in Jesus' but Jesus Himself. And in contrast with the myriad variety of form in which Kṛishṇa could indifferently unveil his Divine nature, one form only was capable of making supreme disclosure to man of the God of our Christian faith. He had to take the form of a servant and for our salvation become obedient unto death.

The Hindu *avatār* is a temporary intervention of the Divine which is made in a guise that is a disguise, and which is intrinsically repeatable in other disguises. The Incarnate Christ, on the other hand, is a unique intervention determinative once for all of the course of world-history, and effected in a guise which is an unsurpassable revelation, within the temporal and concrete, of the character and purpose of God.

How are minds which have been formed in the mould of Hindu philosophy to be helped to a recognition of the full Divinity of the historical Jesus? How are they to be enabled to pass from veneration of His character to worship of His Person? That for such minds the transition cannot be easy is evident from what has just been said. An authentically Christian faith in the Incarnation in Jesus, in a historic judgment upon sin in His Cross, and in a call to follow a Risen Victor, cannot be simply added to Hindu faith, even in its theistic forms, as merely a hitherto missing complement; for these central Christian conceptions belong to a type of religious faith and experience which, as Rudolf Otto would say, turns on a different axis. There is needed a radical discarding of ways of thought for which historical crises cannot be pregnant of eternal meaning because cosmic process



consists only of purposeless cycles of evolution and involution. But is it mere wishful thinking to wonder whether, in this matter, the Providence of God is not effecting what mere preaching might scarce accomplish?

At the end of the preceding chapter, Dr. Devānandam was quoted as remarking that 'modern Hinduism is making claims on life that cannot be supplied by anything in Hinduism itself.' With the rise of an Indian Nationalism which Mr. Gandhi has helped to imbue with spiritual fervour, thousands of Indian young men and women have been fired with ideals of self-denying labour in the sphere of social reform, economic reconstruction, and the uplift of the down-trodden classes. Can those who are spending themselves in such ways remain content with a non-teleological view of the world-process and with an Absolute which, in its own immanent perfection, 'cares for none of these things'? Philosophical Hinduism has a seductive fascination for the world-weary soul. But let a man be fired with the enthusiasm of a noble mission and with the satisfaction of pursuing enterprises which make calls on his finest powers, and there will be evoked in him a spirit which surely must hunger, unconsciously or consciously, for a less world-negating religious faith. If we can introduce such an one to Christ as supreme Leader in every worthy crusade, may he not be carried on and on, until one day he shall find himself addressing Jesus in the wondering and adoring words, 'My Lord and my God'?

When in imagination I visit that great spiritual edifice which is called Hinduism, I seem to see, inscribed within on every wall, the words, 'Behold Me and Adore.' Within the Gospel edifice, on the other hand, everywhere the inscription is, 'Know My Voice and Follow Me.' It is into the heart of the concrete and temporal that this following conducts us; and it is as we *follow* Him that we learn most fully to *adore* Him. For it is in the effort to imitate Him that we discover His incomparableness.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE TO CHAPTER II

In the foregoing chapter (at p. 32) it was remarked that the only cloud that is quite impervious to the radiance of the Divine Presence is insincerity, not doctrinal error. There may be few



who would question that remark when the 'error' relates to doctrinal issues about which Christian Churches are at variance. But in the above chapter the remark has a far wider reference. The meaning is that there may, through Divine grace, be redemptive communion between God and the individual soul even when the latter has not recognised the Lordship of Christ and when its doctrinal beliefs are not Christian but Hindu. Now there may well be readers who will question this contention, and will cite against it passages like John xiv. 6 and Acts iv. 12.

To do so is to raise a broad and important issue which, writing under the caption, 'The Christian Attitude to Non-Christian Faith,' the author has discussed in a chapter contributed to the symposium on *The Authority of the Faith* which constitutes Volume I of 'The Tambaram Series,' published in 1939. What follows here is an excerpt from that chapter, reproduced by kind permission of the International Missionary Council.

'No note is more dominant in the Bible, and above all in the teaching of our Lord, than that faith is the man-ward condition of receiving God's richest blessings. Because He loves, He will give, without being trustfully entreated, the gifts that every one has the capacity to receive, the sunshine and the rain that any man, good or bad, can appreciate. But spiritual blessings—that of being treated as "little comrade," of having revelation of His mind and purpose, of being trusted with "the powers of the age to come"—for such giving there is a necessary condition. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

'Now, in a world that is full of enigmas, this belief that He is can often be difficult. It is a simple thing to bask in the moonlight when the sky is clear, but when clouds have drifted between, we must either wait for them to pass or change our standing-ground. So, when the enigmas of life becloud the soul's direct vision of God's shining, there is needed a search for a new point of view. There must be the quest for a doctrinal concept that will, by resolving or evading the enigma, restore some experience of His radiance. The doctrinal theory may really avail to render this service without possessing absolute truth. It is enough that it enables us to see past what is *for us*, for the time being, the

obscuring medium. When the enigmas that oppress us change their form, the doctrines needed to remove the interruption in our experience of God's shining must be different. And when Christ quickens us to perceive in its truth the supreme enigma—the appalling fact of sin—no doctrine will suffice but that of His atoning sacrifice.

'To change the figure—a sleep-walker may safely cross a chasm by the narrowest of shaking planks. He is too absorbed in his dream to realise the full threat of the gulf beneath. But let him wake and he will fall. Now in soul and conscience men are prone to be as inappreciative as the sleep-walker of the abysses they think to pass. And so it may befall that, by narrowest and crookedest of doctrinal bridges, they win across the gulf of doubt to that trustful and obedient faith which the Father loves to reward. But when once Christ has stirred them to wakeful perception of the engulfing depths that divide the guilty conscience from trust in God's liberty and readiness to forgive, then by no other bridge than His Cross can they win again to "joy and peace in believing." Where Christ has not yet been spiritually apprehended, there may be other ways than He to the trust in God which enables our Heavenly Father to bestow on a man some measure of communion with Himself. But when Christ succeeds in unveiling for any man the judgment of God on sin, in this very act He cannot help making Himself, for that man, the one and only way. Christ is the only way to God that can remain permanently a thoroughfare.'

### III

## COME, JOIN MY CHURCH

NO one possessing even a fair second-hand acquaintance with the problems of missionary work in India can fail to realise something of the great obstacle which the communal character of Hindu religion places in the way of acceptance of baptism into the Christian Church. But what a second-hand acquaintance realises easily is only how fiercely the domestic, social and economic penalties involved in acceptance of baptism must tempt the convert to shrink back from the admitted duty of joining the organised Christian Church. There is a prior difficulty, however, which is less easily appreciated without first-hand knowledge. The convert may be held back from throwing in his lot with the Christian community not merely by the costliness of that act but by honest question as to whether that act is really his duty.

Cases, of course, are frequent where the question is simply whether, for a particular convert in his particular circumstances, the hour has yet struck when he ought to make public profession and submit to the consequences. For example, a man may postpone his intention of being baptised in the hope that by the postponement he may be enabled to carry his wife with him into the Christian fold. Or again, as must frequently happen in educational missionary work, a Christian teacher may advise a youth who has given his heart to the Lord that, for the sake of the Christian cause itself, he should deny himself the privilege of joining the Church until he is economically independent. For (to mention one reason only) when baptism renders a convert penniless, Christian friends must provide for him, and a handle is thus given to those who love to accuse Missions of manufacturing mere 'rice-Christians.' Cases such as these raise only the question of the time when, for a given individual in his given circumstances, the command of Christ, 'Follow Me,' translates itself into the command, 'Join My Church.' But every missionary or evangelist who has worked among caste-people must be

familiar with the emergence of a much more radical question, namely, the question whether the one command *ought* to translate itself into the other, or at any rate whether it ought to do so in a land like India.

My memory holds vivid recollections of a young Brahmin student who sought a personal interview with me and who, seated beside me at my study table, seemed to yield himself wholly to Christ. He told me how, when he first joined our College, he had felt no interest in the Bible Study class, but how it had gradually become for him the most interesting hour in the College timetable. Then he had been drawn to attend a short series of directly evangelistic addresses which members of the staff had joined with the Methodist and Danish Missions in conducting in a tent by the sea-shore, and which had directly aimed at leading over the border-line students who, through College teaching, had been drawn near to the Kingdom of God. The impression which these addresses had made on the young man had led him to seek a personal talk with myself. In the weeks which followed I became more and more charmed by the simple sincerity of his Christian faith and life. Among his friends he made no secret of his change of inward allegiance. He laid aside his caste-scruples. Also every Sunday morning he used to gather together, on the veranda of the house in which he lodged, a few Hindu coolies and beggars and preached Christ to them. Presently I began to wonder whether I should raise with him the question of joining the Church by baptism. I took counsel with a senior colleague, a man whose life and teaching I knew to be the most effectual Christian influence in our College. In reply he asked me the question: 'Do you think a Brahmin convert *can* be baptised and still continue to be a Christian?' I was not so inexperienced as to be unable to understand that seemingly paradoxical suggestion. It was not of the dangers of persecution that my colleague was thinking but of the perils of disillusionment. The Brahmin who undergoes baptism is cutting himself off from a community-life in which his whole development has been rooted. All might be well if the circle he is entering provided for him a community-life not less but much more vital, and manifestly drawing its life-breath from loyalty to the Lord for whose sake the Brahmin convert has severed his dearest ties. But, on the mission-field as in the Church

of the West, there are congregations which do not conspicuously achieve that ideal. And the danger that a newly converted man may have to face a testing experience of disillusionment is probably greater on the mission-field. Those who, within Christendom, pass through a personal crisis of conversion have usually had enough prior acquaintance with the organised Church to be well aware of its weaknesses, and, when they throw in their lot with it, do not take the decision under any serious illusion as to what to expect. Also the decision does not involve for them a severance of their most intimate personal relationships, and so their need of being sustained by a new spiritual fellowship, although great, is not so overwhelming. With the Brahmin or other high caste convert, on the other hand, the position is different. It may come to him with something of a shock to find how much that is un-Christian lingers on within the Church of Christ. 'For so little,' he may disappointedly say to himself, 'I have sacrificed so much.' If the disillusionment leads to embitterment, or perhaps to a pharisaic superiority, who has the right to blame him? But an embittered or a pharisaic Christian is not truly Christian, and so my colleague's seemingly paradoxical question makes good sense after all—the question whether a Brahmin convert can be baptised and still continue to be a Christian. It points to a misgiving which the missionary may have carefully to weigh when he thinks about pressing a Brahmin who has surrendered his heart to Christ to give public expression to that act of the soul by joining the organised Church.

Nevertheless, there is equal force in the counter-question whether a convert can continue to be a Christian if he refuses to offer himself for baptism. Provided the refusal be made with a good conscience, his Christian life may take no harm as long as circumstances allow him to keep in touch with those who have led him to the feet of the Master, so that he enjoys the reality of Christian fellowship while remaining outside the Christian pale. But such a conjunction of circumstances is unstably poised, and Christian fellowship is a primary condition of healthy Christian life. So, in spite of my colleague's pause-giving question, I decided to raise the issue delicately with my young new brother in the faith. The result was instructive to me at the time, and is still more instructive as I reflect on it to-day.

The fact of outstanding significance was that my tentative suggestion struck no answering chord in the young man's heart at all. In surrendering his life to the Lord he had evidently never dreamed of living it elsewhere than within the Hindu pale. That there should be dishonesty in this was an idea that had never struck him and which he brushed aside as unreal when I suggested it. Where was the dishonesty? Within the Hindu fold, he pointed out with truth, there is complete freedom of *beliefs*, for Hinduism is not a credal religion. Certain rites and ceremonies are obligatory, but as to the meaning a Hindu reads into these forms there is unfettered liberty of judgment. My young friend assured me that nowhere did he make any secret of his new Christian beliefs, but on the contrary he sought to propagate them. When he used Hindu rites or practised Hindu forms of devotion, he gave them a Christian interpretation. And as for caste scruples, he took every opportunity of witnessing to his looseness from them. Were he to take baptism, he felt that this witness-bearing would be not more but less telling, for he would be cut off from those intimacies of fellowship within which he had his best opportunities for effectual influence. In very loyalty to his Lord, therefore, he must remain unbaptised. Baptism, he averred, was doubtless a good institution for the conditions of New Testament days, but he did not think that Christ would enjoin it if He came to India to-day.

Was there wishful thinking in all this? Not wishful thinking, I imagine, so much as a somewhat juvenile simplicity. Yet among Hindu enquirers there are maturer minds whose thought runs along very similar lines. For a caste-convert there can be honest doubt as to whether the injunction, 'Follow Me,' includes the further command, 'Join My Church.' And for the missionary or evangelist there can be anxious perplexity as to the counsel to be offered.

A more vivid realisation of this fact was the chief lesson which this incident had for me at the time of its occurrence. To-day, on the other hand, I find it still more instructive by the force with which it raises the question whether, in the religious teaching that was being given by the Christian colleges and by other missionary agencies, the challenge of the Gospel was receiving its correct expression. Ought it to have been possible that from the mind of

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a Hindu who was surrendering his life to Christ as Lord there should be completely absent the idea of living that life of obedience to Christ elsewhere than within the Hindu pale? Is the challenge of the Gospel to India fully declared unless all the time it is presented as including, in the directest possible way, a challenge to join the organised Church of Christ? Hinduism provides as its very essence a particular kind of community-life. Can any alternative to Hinduism offer itself as seriously a real alternative unless there belongs to it a community-life that is equally all-pervasive and at the same time far more vital? And is there not something more to be said than even that? Was not the founding of the Church the central strategic conception dominating our Lord's conduct of the campaign to which His designation as the Messiah summoned Him? And if so, must not the command, 'Follow Me,' have as an intrinsic part of its meaning a summons to join His New Israel—that Church of which He, while still on earth, selected the first leaders and which, despite its manifold defects and its deplorable fragmentation, is still His Church?

Whether or not this note was insufficiently stressed in the preaching and teaching of my contemporaries on the Indian mission-field, I have to make regretful confession that it had very little place in my own teaching. This was because, until almost the end of my missionary career, the idea of the Church was no intrinsic part of my conception of the Gospel. Always, of course, I had been aware that one could not love Christ without loving His brethren, and that this brotherly love, rooted in loyalty to a common Lord, must create a fellowship animated by aims and purposes the prosecution of which would inevitably require the fellowship to organise itself as a definitely constituted community. That Jesus, while still on earth, had approvingly foreseen this inevitable development I did not doubt. And all along I had realised that, once this development had taken place and an organised Church had come into being, any convert who refrained from uniting himself with the organised Church would be imperilling his own spiritual growth and excluding himself from sacramental worship and from the corporate forms of Christian service. But to recognise merely such obvious facts as these was to perceive only a consequential relation between Gospel and Church



and not an integral and constitutive relation. And the practical result of holding such a conception was that the question of joining the Church appeared to be an issue to be taken up with a convert only after he had made personal surrender to the Lord rather than to be presented from the first as an integral part of the evangelical challenge and the evangelistic appeal.

Whether it be the case or not that there are in India foreign missionaries whose thinking on this subject still stands where mine did, I know that there are in that land many sincere followers of our Lord, some of them nominally outside the Church, some of them within it, to whose imagination the idea of the Church makes no living appeal. By them the thesis of the present chapter must be felt as 'an hard saying.' To affirm that the challenge of the Gospel in India is not fully declared unless it is presented as directly including a challenge to join the organised Church is an affirmation that may easily be unwelcome. For if, to the Jews of St. Paul's day, the chief stumbling-block in the way of an acceptance of the Gospel was the offence of the Cross, in India the chief stumbling-block is the offence of the Church—the offence of the summons to join a community which abjures the authority of that system of corporate life into which the very being of the Hindu has been woven, and which the new nationalism takes pride in as a precious heritage. This must continue to be a stone of stumbling, no matter how successfully the Indian Church may learn to shake off the elements of foreignness that still cleave to it; for within the most indigenously ordered Church Christ must be King, and His commandments may run counter to the obligations of Hindu community-life. But while this rock of offence can never be taken away, it is a stumbling-block far bigger than it need be if the preaching by which the convert has been won to a personal surrender to Christ has left on him the impression that the Church is merely a particular Christian institution and not something belonging to the very texture of the freedom with which Christ sets men free.

Hinduism is essentially a distinctive type of community-life. It is a type of community-life which, like all things human, has grievous defects, but which produces and sustains fine spiritual values, and has exhibited great power to survive the shocks to which, in the course of history, it has been exposed. If the



tenacious grip of this community-life upon the individual Hindu is to be effectually countered, there must be opposed to it something which, in this social reference, is not merely its negation. It must be countered by something which does more than call upon the convert to leave the Hindu fold and win to individual salvation along a path the loneliness of which is mitigated only by chance fellowship with similar lonely pilgrims. Christianity is essentially life in fellowship, and if the proclamation of the Gospel is to have that challenging relevancy which was stressed in the opening chapter of this book, it must include the offer of a community-life still more vital and sustaining than that of which it entails the surrender.

When I study the way of salvation in Christ with an attention that is sharpened by recollection of the place of the community in Hindu life, it humbles me to reflect for how long my own perception of the contours of the structure of the Gospel was distorted by an inherited individualism. Looking back, I can see this individualism obtruding itself in ways which, even if seemingly trivial, I now find significant. For instance, when I sought to pour out my soul in the words of the Lord's Prayer which so consistently avoids the first person singular, it used never to occur to me to intend, by the words 'our' and 'us,' anything but a way of expressing in the unison of a public repetition the meaning, 'my' and 'me.' It may be more useful here, however, to cite a different kind of example which, by posing for me a problem insoluble on individualistic premisses, did much to drive me beyond individualism.

This problem was bequeathed to my mind as a troublesome legacy by a publication of my own, entitled *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*. Of that book it had been a ruling conception that if God be truly the Omnipotent Father proclaimed by Jesus, then He must be able, and on the appeal of faith He must be willing, to grant us (by miracle if necessary) immediate release from anything and everything that is really evil and not a blessing in disguise. Present redemption from 'natural evil,' since it was the most novel part of the thesis, received perhaps the chief attention, but deliverance here and now from 'moral evil' or sinfulness was quite explicitly included. The logic of the inference imperatively required this, for what evil can be more real than sin? And yet the

conclusion to which it pointed, namely, that consistent sinlessness lies within present human reach, did not seem to be borne out even by the experience of the saints. Now when a conclusion is inferentially necessary and yet contrary to fact, something must be wrong with its premisses. I began to surmise that mine was an unreal problem, deriving its speciousness from an individualism in my conceptions of sinfulness and of redemption from sin, an individualism which was beginning to be condemned both by my studies in the field of ethics and by a better understanding of the Bible. I began to realise how persistently, in regard to the whole issue of redemption from evil, the Bible tends to think socially or corporately rather than individualistically. For it individual salvation is a sharing of a corporate human redemption, and indeed of a cosmical redemption. The Divine purpose, as the Bible conceives it, is a morally transformed humanity in an appropriately transformed world-order. Of that transformed humanity which shall be fit to be trusted with a transfigured world-order the Church is the nucleus and the nursery. So the community which is Christ's New Israel has a cosmic significance which the Hindu community has never claimed, and is set inside a real universal history of which Hindu thought has never formed the conception.

This claim for the Church of an integral place in the scheme of Creation and Redemption bears so directly on the question of the convert's duty to join the Church's membership that it must occupy our attention throughout the remainder of the present chapter.

There is a little discussed oracle of our Lord's which may afford a useful starting-point (John v. 16, 17). In defence of His readiness to heal on the Sabbath He used words which implied that the Creator's programme did not come to an end on 'the sixth day.' On the contrary, so Jesus declared, God has never stopped working, and I am only following His example. The saying casts a revealing light on our Lord's reading of the Old Testament. In its account of Creation and its account of God's subsequent dealings with man Christ saw not two stories but one. He recognised that when God said, 'Let there be light,' He was starting on a creative undertaking from which He has taken no holiday, and which will not be concluded until the perfect Kingdom of God arrives.

No true canon of interpretation requires us to treat the opening chapters of Genesis as literal history. In fact we might say that Divine Providence has been at pains to guard us against making that mistake by seeing to it that the picture of the beginning of things in the first chapter of Genesis, and the other picture of beginnings which is drawn in the second and third chapters, should be very different—indeed, should be in fundamental disagreement as to the order and method of Creation. The discrepancies are plain evidence that in the first three chapters of Genesis we are required to seek insight rather than information. They offer us not true information about how things began but true insight into what it costs God to bring into being the kind of world He wishes to create.

What is the outstanding lesson suggested? There is an old, old question which the horrors of war have been making many people ask themselves to-day with a new agony of bewilderment. It is this. *Can* such a world as ours possibly have had a good and omnipotent Creator? Why did not God—if indeed there be a God—give men a better world to live in, a world in which there would have been no sickness, no death, no torturing pain, no grinding over-work, no tragedy? Now when, with this harrowing question in our minds, we study the opening chapters of Genesis, at once we are helped to take two steps towards an answer. The majestic imaginative picture of Creation drawn in the first chapter makes us say to ourselves: 'Well, at any rate, if God has not given us a more comfortable world to live in, it is not because He could not; for to Him the creative act is as effortless as speech is for us. He has, as it were, but to say the word and it is done. And since the fact is so, the universe which He has fashioned for our dwelling-place must be exactly what He chose to make it; it must be a universe good for the purpose He had in view.'

With this first step towards an answer, however, of course we are not content. Our minds go on to ask: 'Well, if that be so, why did not God make a different choice? Why did He not create for us a more comfortable world to inhabit?' And here Genesis steps in with the story which occupies its second and third chapters. Doubtless it was, even at the date when the Book of Genesis was compiled, a very ancient story—an old-world sort of parable which

employed very primitive ideas to picture forth the profoundest kind of truth. That story takes up the problem which is still agitating us moderns, and what it says to us is in effect this. Once upon a time God did do what you think that at the Creation He ought to have done. When God made the first man, He made for him an environment which was like the most perfect garden imaginable, a veritable 'Kingdom of Heart's Desire.' Food was abundant and delicious; there was fruit for the picking that conferred immortality; there was no hard labour; there was no torturing pain. But man proved unfit to be trusted with this wonderful environment, and so God had to take it away and give man instead the kind of world which we know. For men can turn their Kingdom of Heart's Desire into a veritable Purgatory if they are given it before they are ready for it.

Now let us take this old-world parable and along with it the majestic picture of Creation in Genesis, Chapter I, and let us ask ourselves what is the great lesson which, in combination, they teach us. Is it not this? Taken together, do they not open our eyes to the real problem which a Creator-God has to face? For Him the difficulty does not lie in creating for our habitation and use the perfect universe He would like us to enjoy. He can create one kind of Natural Order just as easily as He can another. For a Creator-God the difficulty is something different; it is that of fashioning the kind of humanity that can be trusted with a perfect Natural Order. It must be a human race that is animated by a spirit of eager voluntary obedience. And obedience that is voluntary can only be elicited; it cannot be created by an act of almightiness.

So the real truth about Creation is this. It is not an event that happened once upon a time. Creation is still going on; it is always going on. And the goal of this age-long process of Creation is the endowing of man with a God-centred life lived under perfect conditions. We of to-day call the life lived under those conditions 'heaven.' The New Testament calls it 'The Kingdom or Reign of God.' What it will be like we cannot imagine. We know only that it is the kind of life, lived under the kind of conditions, that it will satisfy God's Fatherly heart to create for His children. And in order that He may become free to bring to pass this goal of His creative purpose God has, throughout the centuries, been

patiently seeking to win from mankind the faith and devotion that will permit Him to trust it with so great a boon.

That is the meaning of the Bible story of Jehovah's dealings with Abraham and his descendants. It shows us God singling out the Hebrew people to see if He can make of them what He needs. Can He develop in them the beginnings of the kind of community that may be allowed to inherit the perfect world of His intention? With this object He rescues them from Egypt and promises, on certain conditions, to conduct them to a land 'flowing with milk and honey.' But since they never wholly fulfilled the conditions, what God felt at liberty to give them never came up to expectations. They presumptuously mistook His favour for favouritism; and so, by means of judgment after judgment, interpreted to them by prophet after prophet, He laboured to teach them how exacting a thing life in comradeship with a Divine friend must be—how costly to both the little comrade and the Great Comrade. But to the end the Hebrew kingdoms proved recalcitrant, and so God's Providence had to permit the destruction first of the Northern Kingdom and then of the Southern. Yet not even then did the Heavenly Father give up His endeavour. Out of the broken Remnant He sought to fashion a people less unfit to inherit the Kingdom of God. To them also He sent prophet after prophet, and finally He sent His Son. Jesus came with a message and an offer to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'; and since He found them rejecting the conditions of that offer, He set Himself to realise an idea of a revolutionary kind. He worked to found a new kind of human society—an Israel of His own, cutting across all national divisions and conscious of a world-wide mission. Its mission was not simply to do propaganda work; for that a mere preaching-band might have sufficed. Its mission was to *receive* something and to *be* something. Its mission was to receive, and to help the whole world to receive, a new quality of life—a life whose fit setting will be the 'new heavens and a new earth' of the prophetic dream. Its mission was to be the nucleus and the nursery of that transformed humanity to which alone God may entrust the eternally purposed crown of His work of Creation.

A people conscious of a mission, conscious of a mission to receive something and to be something—that is how we are to

describe the community which we call the Church. It is an unusual conjunction. With *organisations* which have a mission we are familiar—organised associations which are brought into being to serve particular objectives. Also we are familiar with *peoples* which are not conscious of any mission as their *raison d'être*. If unself-consciously they make united pursuit of any enduring aim, it is merely the conservation of their accustomed ways of life. The Hindu community is such a people. On the one hand, it is not an association which an individual can voluntarily join. 'In order to be a Hindu, a man must have been born in one of the social groups which historically have become associated together in Hinduism, chiefly under Brāhman supervision, and which are known as castes. A European may call himself a Hindu, because he believes certain Hindu doctrines; but, according to all Hindu books and all Hindu usage, it is absolutely impossible for him to become a Hindu.'<sup>1</sup> So wrote Dr. Farquhar in 1912, and the words are still true to-day. On the other hand, if the Hindu community is not an association, neither is it a people that is conscious of unitedly pursuing any mission, unless it be the conservation of its ancient ways of life. To quote Dr. Farquhar again:<sup>2</sup> 'If we are to understand the spirit of Hinduism, it is necessary first of all to learn to sympathise with the immeasurable reverence which the Hindu feels for the social organisation of his people,' which goes back, he believes, to an incalculable past. For him 'what we call moral laws are rather sacred customs which have been traditionally observed from times immemorial than eternal principles of the moral life. These customs are inextricably interwoven with the special forms of family life and social organisation which have created the people. To tamper with them is therefore to be guilty at once of sacrilege and of treason against the life of the race. But these customs, though regarded as inviolably sacred and absolutely essential for the well-being of the people which practises them, are not regarded as binding on other peoples: other customs may be necessary for them, and therefore sacred and inviolable to them.' Hindu efforts to proselytise the foreigner have something of the savour of a retaliatory enterprise, pleasing to the new nationalism; for to the genius of Hinduism it is fundamentally alien either to practise or to tolerate convert-making. The Hindu

<sup>1</sup> Farquhar's *Primer of Hinduism*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 191 f.

community is a people without consciousness of a mission.

With social factors, then, of these two types we are familiar. Examples abound of *associations* with a deliberate objective, and of *peoples* unconscious of any distinctive mission. On the other hand, peoples conscious of a mission are a much rarer phenomenon and, when met with, are something of a portent. One thinks of Islam and its mighty impact on history. One thinks of the Japanese people, whose sense of a vocation rooted in a Divine origin gave them strength to rock a hemisphere to its foundations. One thinks of the Russian revolution and its amazing sequel, where a sense of vocation inspired by an ideology, and making alliance with the feeling of nationality, has released such immeasurable energies. When one thinks of these historical portents, what achievements might one not expect from a Church which was really what Christ meant it to be—a people conscious of a transcendent mission of cosmic significance, which was laid upon it by the incomparable Lord Jesus, and in the service of which He died and triumphantly rose again?

Is it necessary, however, to be content with such merely analogical reasoning? Might we not hope to advance at least a little way towards comprehending how, by the very fact of being a people conscious of a mission committed to it by an incomparable Leader, the Church finds unlocked for it an immense store of virile energy, so that it becomes plainly true to say that membership of the Church belongs to the very texture of the freedom with which Christ sets men free?

'The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' In these well-known words, St. Paul has described the moral impotence from which Christ brings release. It is not merely the words that are familiar; the fact which the words describe is equally familiar. It is a subject which invites a treatise devoted entirely to itself. Here I can offer no more than a few tentative suggestions, somewhat baldly expressed.

Consider first of all the fact that the moral impotence from which we suffer is not evenly distributed over the whole field of the individual's experience. It is not the case that man possesses no stable power of will at all. Popular speech distinguishes instinctively between 'good resolutions,' which are notoriously brittle, and 'decisions,' which commonly get acted out. There are



decisions of a kind which it is possible both to make and unfalteringly to execute. For instance, we can decide on a particular deed and carry it through. Also we can decide to make and keep a definite rule of action. Something that is at once positive in its conception, and so clear-cut as not to involve fresh deliberation upon each occasion of performance—that we can, even if it goes against the grain, not only decide on but carry out. On the other hand, in respect of a vague and essentially negative purpose, like that of never being unfaithful to some conscientious principle, we are helplessly unstable. It is not the case merely that in fact we do sometimes stumble and break such a good resolution. It is more than that. Our plight is that we are unable to believe that such stumbles will not occur: we have no assured expectation of being consistently faithful.

This brings a second point to notice. It is precisely by a quite confident *expectation* of performance that 'decisions' stand in contrast with mere 'good resolutions.' Not only so, but this assured expectation constitutes the strength of the 'decision,' while the absence of it constitutes the weakness of the 'good resolution.' It may not be quite true to say, 'I can, provided I believe that I can'; but it is certainly true that I cannot, if I am sure that I cannot. In this important sense faith belongs to the very essence of will. Indeed, it was included in its definition by that acutely analytic student of psychology, the late Professor Stout, when he wrote that a volition or act of will consists in 'a desire qualified or refined by the judgment that so far as in us lies we shall bring about the desired end because we desire it.'<sup>1</sup> The precarious kind of good resolution is really not itself an act of will, but only *contains* an act of will. It is not itself a decision to behave always thus and thus, but it contains the decision to *try* to behave always thus and thus. And this limitation to trying betrays an expectation of at least occasional failure. Sometimes, indeed, it betrays even an unwillingness to be always successful. We cannot bear the idea of being parted once for all, by an inflexible decision, from our favourite sins. I cannot, unless I *believe* that I can. And I cannot believe that I can, until I am *willing* to believe that I can. Both faith in oneself and whole-hearted desire are indispensable to release from moral impotence.

<sup>1</sup> *Manual of Psychology*, p. 711.



Such release depends also on a social factor. For faith is a social thing. To believe with assurance what nobody else believes is all but impossible. So when I find that by few or none of my comrades am I expected to be consistently faithful to some moral ideal, my power to be faithful receives a deadly blow. Without heartrending difficulty and failure, most men can live up to the code of conduct expected of and achieved by all honourable men of their own social circle. It is mainly when the individual tries to rise beyond this, and to practise consistently a level of thought, emotion and deed which is regarded by his circle as only an ideal and not a *sine qua non* of honour and good breeding—it is mainly then that he feels a moral certainty of frequently failing. It need not be the case that the virtues of this higher level are intrinsically more difficult than those which have become a matter of course; for levels of conduct which by one circle are regarded as a mere ideal are by another circle exacted as a matter of obvious good breeding. The explanation is rather to be sought in the contrast between the form in which the moral imperative addresses us when we are aiming at a standard which our own circle regards as merely an ideal, and the form in which it addresses us when we are following simply the standard which that circle exacts from us. Every born leader of men understands the difference between the command, 'Go,' and the command, 'Come.' Now the call to live up to the standard which our own circle exacts of us is a command which says, 'Come.' Our fellows are doing the same and are asking from us no more than they lay upon themselves. They trustfully count on our practising the ordinary virtues, and so any declension from this level would be, we feel, a breach of trust. On the other hand, the man who has learned to aspire after perfect conformity to an ideal standard not yet reached by his fellows hears the moral imperative uttering the chill command, 'Go.' It is to a lonely task that he has to address himself, a task which his fellows may or may not admire him for attempting, but in which at any rate they anticipate and are very ready to condone failures.

There is another difference. Besides the contrast between the commands, 'Go' and 'Come,' there is a contrast between that to which these different forms of command utter a summons. The ideal levels of virtue are so little practised that our conceptions of

them are largely abstract and even negative in character. We have little concrete conception of what life would consist of if the generality of men were ideally just, ideally honest, ideally selfless, ideally generous, ideally ready to turn the other cheek. We are not quite sure indeed whether an ordered economy would be practicable on those terms. So, if we address ourselves to attain an ideal level, we have to aim at these virtues directly instead of reaching them indirectly by throwing ourselves into a concrete life that embodies them. On the other hand, the demands of the average moral standard are part and parcel of a life that is well understood and has been proved practicable. The virtues which at any time form the standard expected of every good citizen are virtues which are obviously indispensable to the smooth working of the social order at its current level of development. Without them the world's work would not get itself done. They are, therefore, obvious aspects of the task which invitingly challenges each man's energies. So long as we are children and have little share in the world's work, we may have to aim consciously at these virtues as virtues; we may have to try to become good in these respects. But when, as adults, we have entered upon the world's work, the commonplace virtues become almost easy, being called forth in us unself-consciously by the challenge of a concrete task which is impossible without them. Most of us are familiar with the phrase, 'the expulsive power of a new affection.' There is expulsive power also in a new interest. A man may be set free from tenacious habits of self-indulgence simply by learning a new absorbing interest which leaves no room for them.

Now even so sketchy an analysis as I have offered of the nature of will and the conditions of its inflexibility may go some way toward showing that membership of the Church belongs to the very texture of the freedom with which Christ sets men free. To hear the Lord inviting me to let myself be re-born as member of a new people is not to be summoned to a precarious good resolution but to be faced with a simple decision, 'Yes' or 'No.' To know myself member of a people whom an incomparable Leader has entrusted with a mission involving a thrilling crusade is to be plunged into a life, the absorbing interest of which expels the disposition to self-indulgence, and which is pursued in fellowship with comrades who count on my faithfulness. And to find

that God in Christ, who knows my morally impotent past, nevertheless believes in me enough to begin sending me at once on errands for Him is to have restored to me a humble belief in myself. Tremblingly believing that 'I can,' I find that, increasingly, I can; and adoringly loving the Lord who wants me to grow into His likeness, I become willing to believe that I can bid even my favourite sins a final adieu. In the willingness there is born the belief; and in the belief there is born the power.

'The Bible'—so someone has said—'knows nothing of solitary religion.' As a member, or else as a parasite, one must share the life-sap of the Christian community if one's Christian life is not to die of inanition. But comradeship enters into the Christian life in a more vital way than as merely a means to the more successful maintenance of fidelity. In the true inspiring goal of Christian longing my own salvation is only an incidental element—an element which, because I can do more to hinder its accomplishment than the accomplishment of any other element, claims from me a certain special attention, but which should not feel to me more precious than the other elements. The true inspiring goal of Christian longing is that Jesus may 'see of the travail of His soul.' It is that our adored King, under whose leadership alone can we see any hope for humanity or for ourselves, may win the victory on which He has set His heart and for which He has made the ultimate sacrifice, the victory of gaining for man the Kingdom of Heaven by creating the kind of world-wide community on which alone God may rightly bestow it.

No people can endure without giving itself the instrument of some kind of organisation or constituent ordering. Least of all is that possible for a people that is conscious of a mission. Christ trusted His New Israel to organise itself, merely choosing for it its first leaders. If only that New Israel, in organising itself for the discharge of its mission, had not failed to 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' how much less hard would have been the saying that the challenge of the Gospel in India is not fully declared except as including a challenge to join the organised Church. For then would the convert from Hinduism more readily have felt that the costliness of obeying that summons was the costliness not of a duty but of a privilege. But is the challenge invalidated by the imperfections and the fragmentation of the

New Israel as historically organised? Despite all its faults it is the present phase of the fulfilment of the gallant venture of faith by which our Lord singled out a few men of lowly station with the words, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men,' and in the strength of which He daringly made to an inconspicuous little flock of disciples the amazing declaration, 'It is your Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom.'

## IV

### SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF HIS CHRIST

IN this chapter we are to note what contours of the Gospel edifice stand out when it is flood-lit by the illumination of a concept which has no analogue in typical Hindu thought, the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God. This central Christian idea is not merely lacking in India but is 'contrary to the type of piety to be found in India. It has its roots in the soil of the old and specifically different prophecy of Israel, of a "day of Jahveh," when He will come to erect His kingdom in His people and in the nations, when "righteousness" shall cover the land like water, and when at last that for which the fathers hoped will become *real*.' So wrote the late Rudolf Otto in that little book of his on Bhakti-religion which is such an achievement in sympathetic criticism that no student of Indian religion should miss it.<sup>1</sup>

I need make no apology for borrowing rather freely from the few short pages in which Otto emphasises this contrast. We have to recognise here a radical difference as regards both the evaluation of the world and the conception of God, even of the personal *Īśvara* of Bhakti faith. '*Īśvara* thrones in his eternity,' Otto writes in an eloquent passage. 'Deep beneath him rushes the stream of the world and humanity in *samsāra*, in ever repeated circles of woeful birth and rebirth. In this world the wandering soul strolls, separated from *Īśvara* by its fall and lost in the confusion of the world. Then he inclines to it in pure, undeserved grace. Out of the infinite number of the lost, he raises his own to himself. But this world of wandering rushes and runs on from one æon to another. Never does it become the abode of the glory or the honour of God. It remains ever what it is, a *līlā*, a sport of the Deity, a concatenation without goal and end—true, not without objective existence, but eternally worthless, never arriving at a fulness of worth, never *glorified* and made an abode

<sup>1</sup> *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity, Compared and Contrasted*, S.C.M. Press, p. 70.

of the kingdom and of the final dominion of God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Without surrender of its typical character, Indian religion can reject Saṅkara's reduction of the world to a mere phantasmagoria; it needs not to be 'world-denying' in that extreme degree. But, as Otto says, it can give 'no genuine *worth* to the world because it knows nothing of a *goal* of the world.' With a measure of backing from the Upanishads, a Rāmānuja can maintain the reality of the world, a world which is created, sustained and again dissolved by God. 'But this creating, sustaining, dissolving and re-creating is the *līlā* of *Īśvara*, his eternal 'play,' which in consequence of his omnipotence is carried through, without opposition from any quarter, by his mere will, without instrument or means of any sort, which is also permeated with wisdom and beauty, but which as such exists only to pass constantly away again, and to arise afresh in endless and uniform repetition of itself. It is always at the end consumed by fire. But it is never transfigured.'<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, confiding hope of such a transfiguration is an inexpugnable element in both the prophetic and the New Testament outlook. In the Lord's Prayer it has pride of place. And St. Paul can write: 'All created things have had to submit to a seeming purposeless existence—not of their own choice, but subserving some great design of Him who so hath overruled all lives,—yet haunted ever by a hope that they also, even *all* God's creation, shall at last be emancipated from this thralldom to decay, shall at last emerge into the liberty of that glorious state which is the heritage of the sons of God.'<sup>3</sup> It is true that while, for New Testament thought, world-history has what Indian thought has not accorded it, namely a goal which gives it worth, this goal is not merely future. As Professor Dodd has said, 'The Gospel declares that within history an event happened in which the whole purpose of God is fulfilled. That which is beyond history has entered history, and yet history goes on.'<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it goes on not of mere momentum but towards a climax; and if this

<sup>1</sup> *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity, Compared and Contrasted*, S.C.M. Press, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 73 f.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 20, 21; A.S. Way's version.

<sup>4</sup> *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 25 (in *The Church, Community, and State Series*, Vol. III).

culmination were not assured, that which has entered history would not possess its transcendent quality of being 'the whole purpose of God.' Heaven can be already upon earth only because the sure faith that earth will be transmuted into heaven brings a blessed serenity into the costly fellowship of working with Christ for that consummation. Thus the teleological outlook which is so conspicuously missing from even the Bhakta's reading of cosmic process is absolutely vital to our Christian Gospel.

Equally vital and distinctive is the Biblical view of that which is the *nature* of the world-goal. To quote once more from Otto: 'The God of Israel, and still more the God of the New Covenant, purposes and makes this world with an actual, immense, essential value, of which the Fall and the Devil can never rob it, viz. with the value of an incomparable aim, the aim to be the scene and object, not of God's own self-realisation, but of the realisation of His *honour*, viz. of His Divine Lordship, at the end of time, i.e., in the final completion which He will bring in.'<sup>1</sup> In the mind of the Lord who is the Christian's pattern there worked a motive for His mission that was even more compelling than His compassion for lost humanity. In a world that was full of enigmas the honour of its Creator was wrongfully impugned. Sceptics doubted His zeal for righteousness. Victims of calamity or disappointment became uncertain of His love. No man, except the one matchless Son, really knew the Father; none fully realised His accessibility, the eagerness with which He waited to be gracious, the liberty of His love to help to the uttermost. Everywhere the Heavenly Father was misunderstood—misunderstood even by those who worshipped Him. By none was justice done to His character. Instinctively, therefore, the one perfectly filial Son, in supplying a model for Christian prayer, put first the petition, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' and side by side with it the coming of that victorious Reign of God which would abolish every excuse for cruel unbelief and insulting misconceptions.

It was with true insight that the Westminster 'Shorter Catechism' included in its definition of the chief end of man the glorifying of God. But this glorifying is an unveiling of His glory *on earth*; in heaven it shines unclouded. The enigmas which tempt men to unbelief are enigmatic if and because it is felt that

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 74.

the world, being of God's creating, must be worthy of Him. If God be not only 'Reality, Intelligence, Bliss,' but also Will, then creation must be no mere idle 'sport,' but purposeful self-expression. So the work of creating can be no finished undertaking until all obscuring shadows are dissipated and the glory of the Creator's conception stands revealed. Toward this consummation the providence and intervention of God guides the course of history; for its realisation the Christian labours with the kind of activity that is, as Dr. Schweitzer has said, an acted praying.<sup>1</sup>

That all labouring for the Kingdom of God must have just this character, the character of acted prayer, is a thought which is implicit in the first word of the command, 'Seek ye the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.' Christian work is a seeking, not a contriving. The Kingdom of God *comes* to man; it is not *brought about* by man. It is something transcendent, the Creator's finishing of His self-appointed creative task. None but He can establish it. In relation to its coming, schemes of economic or social reform can have the immense value of being a removal of hindrances. They can diminish the occasions for the rise of evil passions which close men's hearts against the grace of God. They may even prepare in more positive ways for the gift from above. But they cannot bring it to pass. Times and seasons the Father 'hath set within His own authority;<sup>2</sup> but He will 'give power' for that labour of service and witness-bearing which is a seeking or acted praying.

Of all this labour which is to be a seeking and not an attempted contriving the dominant motive must be God-centred. The Kingdom that we seek, we ought to seek even more because it is God's Kingdom than because it is man's salvation. That this was the gradation of motives in the mind of the Master, the structure of the Lord's Prayer sufficiently attests; it ought to be the same in the minds of His disciples. Of all the grounds for a wondering, awe-struck thankfulness in the heart of the successful evangelist or missionary the greatest is his discovery that the God who, at the Creation, caused light to shine out of darkness, has shone within even so dark a heart as his own 'to illuminate men with the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> cf. *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Acts i. 7, R.V.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 6, Moffatt's version.



If it is not so, if our work for the Kingdom of God, whether in the way of evangelism or of social uplift or reform, is not God-centred, then what we are offering to India is in one respect lower than what India can offer to us. For the saintly in India, those who have been finders and not merely seekers, have typically been God-centred. Of Indian mystical piety the characteristic trend has been to become absorbed in a spiritual 'realisation' of God to the exclusion of all else. If mundane activity has to be permitted or is even, as in the Gītā, commended, in order to maintain the religiously sanctioned social order, the activity must be carried on without 'attachment' to the fruits of action. There are Indians to-day who have learned to consider this world-negating tendency of Hindu piety a defect in their religious heritage, and who wish to amend it just at this point. But there are others who have the insight to see that this tendency belongs ineradicably to the genius of their religion, and who claim that here Hinduism is superior. Just here, as they might put it, using words in which Otto has correctly reported their attitude,—just here is 'what at bottom separates you from us. You want "morals," "ethics," "culture," and so on. But we "are above it," for we want more and quite different things. We want "salvation" and nothing but salvation. We want to serve God and Him alone, not any cosmic purpose beside and with Him whatsoever.'<sup>1</sup>

Now if, in declaring the full challenge of the Gospel in India, we are not to fall short at this point, our hungering for the fulfilment of the cosmic purpose must not be merely 'beside and with' our hunger for God. Our 'Kingdom of Heart's Desire' must be desired *because* it is God's Kingdom, *because* it is the Reign of Him who enchains our devotion. We must be able to make truthful confession that for us, in a sense, nothing matters but God—in this sense, namely, that any other things which matter for us do so for this reason more than any other, that they matter for God. Realisation of God emancipates the Hindu from the world. For the Christian too there is this emancipation. But because the God of whom he is granted some realisation is a God who loves the world of His creating and has for it a goal, the Christian is emancipated *from* the world only so that, with care-free abandon, he may serve God *in* the world.' The social reformer's

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 81.

zeal and the evangelist's hunger for souls are fully Christian only as they are a conscious communion with the impassioned striving of God, the Creator and Redeemer.

Shall we try to realise something of the difference made to the Christian life of faith by this concept which Indian religion has lacked—the New Testament concept of that Kingdom of God which is both here already and also still on its way to us? The Fourth Gospel chronicles an incident which in this connection is very revealing—namely, the story told in its ninth chapter of the healing of a man who had been blind from birth. Its outstanding feature is the contrast between the instinctive reactions to the situation in the minds of the disciples and in the mind of their Master.

In its peregrinations the little band consisting of the Master and His disciples came up against one of those enigmas which can make it difficult to hold to our belief in a kindly Providence. Here was a man who never in his lifetime had been able to see the sunlight or the stars or the flowers or a human face. When we ourselves meet a tragedy like that, we can scarcely help asking, 'How can God permit such a thing? How can He be God if He permits it?' That was how the disciples felt; and, faced by this doubt, their minds leapt to the Old Testament belief that all disasters are God's judgment upon wickedness. Somebody's past guilt, they argued, must be responsible. Either the man's parents must have sinned, or else the man himself must somehow have incurred guilt before he was born as a sightless infant.

It is immaterial to the present purpose in what manner the disciples may have mentally envisaged such a possibility as the latter of these alternatives. For their contemporaries in India it would, of course, have presented no difficulty, and ideas of pre-existence and transmigration were familiar to Egyptian and Greek thought as well. From one source or another guesses of that sort may have filtered down into the minds of men brought up on such a highway of commerce as Galilee. Or else they may have heard tell of Rabbinic speculations regarding the possibility of prenatal sin committed in the womb. But such conjectures as to the way in which the disciples could regard it as conceivable that for blindness from birth a sufferer might be himself guiltily responsible are a matter of only secondary interest. The really

intriguing feature of the little story is the contrast between the mental reactions of the disciples and of their Master. Instinctively their minds looked backward; instinctively His mind looked forward. Instinctively they sought for a cause; instinctively He looked for a purpose. Instinctively they thought of the Divine sovereignty as judicial; instinctively He thought of it as redemptive. In effect He said to them: Do not let your attention be diverted to idle guesses as to how this sorrowful deprivation was made necessary; our business is to help bring good out of this evil, and to let what has induced men to doubt God's love become an occasion for adoring praise. For us it is enough that our Divinely appointed meeting with this afflicted brother brings us a challenge (as the late Dr. Moffatt's version puts it) 'to let the work of God be illustrated in him,' or to render visible to ordinary human apprehension, in his case, God's eternally active hostility to everything calamitous.

How the Master proceeded to interpret the challenge of that particular situation the narrative goes on to relate. He interpreted it as a call to be 'the light of the world' by glorifying God in men's eyes through a miraculous impartation of the power of sight. Not all of us possess the Master's gift of faith-healing, although if the New Testament be a guide, that is a grace which ought to be far commoner than it is. But there are other ways of abolishing the calamitousness of an evil than by simple removal of the evil. Its very calamitousness may be transmuted into a fountain of blessing. And if the proclamation with which the Messiah opened His Galilean campaign is eternally true, then every calamitous situation in the life of any man is a challenge to the faith of Christ's Church to be the medium of God's infinitely resourceful hostility to the calamitous and the injurious. For the meaning of that Galilean pronouncement was that the dispensation under which we are living is not the 'evil present age' of the apocalyptic tradition. On the contrary it is an era of redeeming Divine interposition. For if the Kingdom of God is 'at hand,' there must already have arrived the 'Day of Jahveh,' the day when the muster-call has gone out to the heavenly hosts and 'the powers of the age to come' are available to fight the evils of this present age.

If our Lord's proclamation of the Kingdom of God as at hand

has eternal truth, then every happening of every day is a challenge to us to be our Kingly Father's interpreters and, wherever necessary, His campaigners. Every situation is full of His creative energy and purpose. It may be a situation in which so much of His purpose has come to a fruition that to the filial eye it is beautiful and glorious. Then its challenge to us is to be His interpreters, so that the glory of His work may stand revealed. Or else it may be a situation which in itself is ugly and dangerous, a situation which is part of the price of human sin, a situation in which no glory of God is perceptible till it is envisaged as part of a battlefield upon which, at infinite willing cost, God Himself is fighting to redeem His creation. In such situations we can be His interpreters only by being also, through His empowerment, His campaigners. Thus in one way or another that Reign of God which both is, and is to be, brings to the sons of the Kingdom a constant challenge. Our communion with God sends us back to earth because it is impossible to have fellowship with One who is spending Himself in redeeming His world, and developing it to that transfiguration which is its eternally purposed goal, save as we ourselves are labouring to the same end.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that this fellowship is not only with God the Redeemer but also with God the Creator, with the God who sustains in its course that which He has brought into being and directs it to its fulfilment. Communion with God can send the Christian back into the world to labours other than those of the social reformer or the missionary. As the Son of Sirach so finely observed long ago regarding the unlettered craftsmen of his day, 'they will maintain the fabric of the world, and in the handwork of their craft is their prayer.'<sup>1</sup> In a useful little Bible-class textbook<sup>2</sup> the Rev. George M. Dryburgh has appended to one of his chapters the Discussion-Group question: 'Can we serve God equally well in the office and on the Mission Field?' If we hold fast by the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God, the right answer must be that the quality of the service in either sphere can be equally good provided that it is 'service.' A servant is not an equal collaborator who, between

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xxxviii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *The Making of a Christian*, 9, 35, Church of Scotland Youth Committee, 1942.

competing pieces of labour, decides for himself which he will undertake. A servant goes where he is sent and does the work which has been assigned to him. As sons of the Kingdom we have a Master. Communion with God does not impel us to make proffer of assistance to the Lord of heaven and earth in some one of His many enterprises that catches our fancy. On the contrary it evokes in us a spirit compounded of diffidence and eagerness. The deeper our communion with God, the more aware do we grow of our unworthiness and incompetence, but at the same time the more eagerly do we long to serve His will. The humblest task He can set us we feel to be so much too high for us that without His commissioning we dare not set about it. But once we have heard the word, 'Go,' all diffident hesitancy should disappear. For, if it is excusable to repeat words which the author used many years ago,<sup>1</sup> if I am really and exclusively on the business of the Divine King, all the resources of our Father's empire of Reality must needs be at my call for the legitimate requirements of my errand. That he who is on the King's business should have the right to work miracles at need is no subject for surprise or incredulity. The real marvel is elsewhere; it lies in the fact that we mortals should actually be entrusted with the King's business.

For a Church which holds fast by the concept of the Kingdom of God all this has manifest truth. But it would not be luminously evident if that concept were surrendered. It would not be an inescapable reading of the vocation of every man of God if Creation were merely Infinitude at play, and if the course of the world were not being actively directed by the living God towards a goal which will be abundantly worth all that it will have cost. It is because of the concept of the Kingdom of God that—to repeat the figure used in a previous chapter—the inscription meet to be emblazoned on every wall of the edifice of our Christian faith is not, as in the Hindu edifice, 'Behold Me and Adore,' but 'Know My Voice and Follow Me.'

Let us pass on now to another characteristic which is imparted to the Christian life of faith by the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God. To-day every thoughtful mind recognises that the Western world has long been suffering from an excessive individualism. There is widespread desire to get away from this.

<sup>1</sup> In his Cunningham Lectures on *Redemption from This World*, pp. 224 f.

and to cultivate community-feeling or the sense of solidarity. Now this blight of individualism has infected even our ideas about the Gospel. We have been apt to imagine that Christ came merely to save as many individual souls as possible. He did not. He came to save the world, to save the world by winning the establishment of God's Reign in it.

If we give to the term, 'salvation,' its fullest meaning, there can be no such thing as a solitary salvation from sin and its curse. For the life of even the regenerate individual cannot possibly be an adequate fulfilling of the pure law of God so long as the only practical alternatives which organised life provides for him to choose between continue to consist, as at present they usually do, of varying shades of moral grey, rather than of pure moral black and pure moral white. That twist in our human nature which theologians call 'sin' has been so pervasive of the world's development that we must be constantly finding ourselves in situations where uncompromising loyalty to the good cannot express itself otherwise than by resolute prosecution of the least compromising of the possible courses of action. Of all this the perfect Reign of God is the antithesis, and it is this Reign of God that the regenerate man is to 'seek first' rather than his own personal salvation. It is through trying to save others—through trying to help save the world—that we shall become saved men and women ourselves.

From the soul-awakening to which all evangelism must address itself there neither can nor should be excluded the element of individual concern about personal destiny. Each sinner has to be brought to the realisation that he is a rebel, and that for persistent rebels there can be only one fate. But if our evangelism concentrates all its appeal at this one point, there is liable to result an individualism like that which characterises the Hindu way of salvation. As Rudolf Otto has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> in Bhakti-religion as among ourselves 'there are told and collected narratives of conversions, conversions of the licentious, robbers, panders, and heretics, who before went other and evil ways, so as to cast away all these things for the service of Vishnu. Here, too, there are revival sermons, and pressure to produce decision, and decision here and now, before it is "too late".' If our Christian evangelistic

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 45.

appeal is to be faithful to the concept of the Kingdom of God, may it not need to be presented in such a manner as to make its corporate reference not an appendix but part of its substance throughout? In the evangelistic enterprise, as part of what may be styled its 'long-term' policy, must there not be included a preliminary training of the young in a community-mindedness that is spiritually awake? Christ was sent to a people which was already community-minded. For their minds 'salvation' meant not mere individual ransomedness but a transformed people in a transformed environment. And Christ came not to save the mere individual but to save the world—to help win for the world the perfect goal which had been the Creator's eternal purpose. To develop in the young a spiritual kind of community-mindedness, we need to fire them with the vision of the Kingdom of God. We must get them to realise how there can be no possibility of its realisation without a world-wide spiritual revolution. We must train them in real community-praying, that is, not a mere praying in unison each for his own need but a praying *with* the others for an identical *shared* need. And, to render this possible, we must develop in them the habit of seeing in their own sins and their own moral impotence their personal share in that moral twist of human nature which we call 'sin,' and which is ruining the whole world, and likewise of seeing in each moral victory for which Divine grace has enabled them a victory in their own share of the universal human fight against sin.

In doing all this for the young, shall we not be bringing them to that stage of spiritual development at which Christ can do for them what He did for Saul on the road to Damascus? As told before King Agrippa for an irreligiously-minded audience, the story of that conversion is naturally reduced to its essentials, and it is suggestive to find that these essentials do not include any words to Saul about salvation for himself personally. Christ had come to meet a rebel, a rebel for whom He felt pity. And the arresting fact is that what He offered this rebel was not a mere amnesty but enlistment in His service. Saul was bound for Damascus with the object of fighting against Jesus, and yet Jesus told him that He wanted him as a recruit, and was prepared to trust him right away by commissioning him to be a witness to what in vision he had seen, and to what in the future he was going



to see. In being set to help save the world, the penitent rebel would find himself becoming, step by step and without noticing it, a sanctified man.

Could there possibly be any other road to sanctification? The single force that can straighten out that twist in our nature which makes us sin is companionship with the one person who does not have that twist, companionship with Jesus Christ. Now we cannot possibly have this companionship with Christ unless we are busy about the same thing that He is doing, that is, unless we too are seeking to win salvation for the world. It is by consciously trying to be channels of God's salvation for others that we unconsciously become saved men ourselves—men saved from that twist in our nature which is sin and the root of all sinfulness.

Where introvertedness persists, there is no authentically Christian conversion; for, as Dr. Gossip has observed, 'To be self-centred is to be at an immense distance from Jesus Christ. And,' he continues, 'among much that is depressing, there is this encouragement these days that the younger generation realise that. They are not obtrusively spiritual, they are not overfond of Church, they have small interest in matters theological, are indeed frankly bored and puzzled by them for the most part; but they do see that a religion to be real must be a service, must be a self-sacrifice: are drawn to Christ, not so much by what He gives, rather by what He asks; are touched that He has need of us, and deigns to put plans that are dear to Him into our keeping, to lean on our frail loyalties, to stoop to take from our soiled hands. If they come to Him at all, it is apt to be like Isaiah that day in the Temple, when he seemed to see God hesitating, looking this way and that, and heard Him say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Me?" Their hearts kindle, leap up, and break away before they are aware, and cry, "Here am I, send me."'<sup>1</sup>

The holiest, most transforming, most fulfilling experience earthly life can know is when the human soul, overwhelmed with penitence and shame, confesses its worthlessness, its foulness, its proneness to stumblings and treachery, and then is amazed to hear Christ saying: 'All that is true; but never mind about that; leave that to Me to set right, and listen to this. Despite all that you have truly confessed, I am going to trust you at once with errands

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, T. and T. Clark, p. 11.



to run for Me; and in running, with Me, upon these errands of Mine, you will find yourself changed, transformed, renewed in your mind, and gradually moulded into My likeness.' It is by His Friendship that Christ saves us, by trusting us with projects for Him, by calling us into His intimacy, no longer using us as mere tools but making of us His comrades in service.

That is what becoming a Christian means. There is no selfish individualism about it. There is no petty absorption in the saving of one's own unimportant little soul—unimportant except (as one marvellingly discovers) to Jesus, for whom nobody is unimportant. We are content that our own salvation should be one little bit of the whole world's salvation; and it is the latter that becomes the main object of our prayers and striving, because it is the object of our Master's striving.

Implicit in the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God is a third consequence which the conditions of our missionary work in India make it worth while to mention briefly. The communal nature of popular religion in India renders Hinduism amazingly tolerant of the most diverse cults and doctrines, but it has an adamantine intolerance of exclusive claims. It will find a place for all sectional religious loyalties provided that they do not assert a disruptive precedence over loyalty to the Hindu joint-family and the caste-community. It offers a *modus vivendi* to all rival forms of religious teaching and praxis, but against any which will not agree to live peaceably on these terms war is inevitable. The *modus vivendi* is that all of them shall be content with the common status of being alternative ways that lead to God. Now with such a status authentic Christianity cannot be content, and the fundamental reason for this refusal is that it knows of a Kingdom of God which is not merely 'to come' but is here already.

Beyond question ways to God are many, as many as there are individual souls. But for Christianity, as for the Old Testament faith out of which it grew, living religion begins where ways to God end. In the Biblical conception living religion does not begin until man has *reached* God, or rather until God has reached man. For the Old Testament faith real religion begins when God makes 'covenant' with man at a face-to-face meeting, and offers to take man as His child-companion upon the single path of His own footsteps. Similarly for Christian faith real religion begins when

the Shepherd *has found* the lost sheep, and when the sheep *know* His voice and trustfully follow Him along the path which He has chosen for all His sheep—that pathway to the perfect Reign of God which He and they are driving through the jungle of this world by present use of ‘the powers of the age to come.’ Ways to God are many; but, as God is One, so the way *with* God through life can be one only. Doubtless the Christian life is, in our experience of it, a way from less of God to more of Him; but His direct revelation of Himself in Christ to the individual soul is not its goal only, but also its starting-point and its daily course.

Without being false to its origins the Christian Church cannot help being aggressive. It cannot act otherwise because, as was urged in the preceding chapter, it is a people conscious of a mission; and this mission consists in being the nucleus and nursery of that transformed humanity to which alone God may entrust the eternally purposed crown of His work of Creation. It is the little flock to which it is the Heavenly Father’s royal pleasure to give that Kingdom in which all obscuring clouds will be dissipated and His glory will stand revealed. It holds its King’s commission to make disciples of all the nations; and in winning them to discipleship of Christ it is glorifying God because the life, death and resurrection of Christ constitute the supreme revelation of God.

To the labours and dangers which this mission must involve it is nerved by grateful wonder at the trust which its Founder placed in it when He left it to carry on His work. And what a supreme venture of trust that was! Among some old notes of my own I find, jotted down from some forgotten source, an artless little tale which, although in form it is pure fantasy, is profoundly true in substance. When the risen Lord ascended to the skies, there was standing at the heavenly gate the Archangel Michael, who was surprised to see Him returned from earth so soon. ‘Is your work on earth as a Man really finished?’ the Archangel enquired. ‘Yes,’ said Jesus, ‘it is finished.’ ‘But who is to carry on the work you have been doing, for there has not been time for many to learn what you went to teach?’ ‘Oh, but I have left My apostles to carry on,’ was the reply. ‘I have left Peter and John and the rest to carry on My work, and those whom they teach will continue it.’ ‘But,’ said Michael, ‘suppose they forget or prove unfaithful,

what then? What other plan have you?' 'I have no other plan,' said the Lord; 'I am trusting to them.'

Is that too childish a tale to find place in a serious discussion? Not in the author's judgment, since for him the most constraining reason for valuing membership of the organised Church of to-day, despite all its defects, is just that this Church is the heir, by continuous spiritual descent, of the little company of those whom the Master made trustful selection of to carry on His mission. Out of the only material available to Him He chose twelve men, and what a poor twelve it seemed! One of them belied the promise of his first days and turned renegade. The others were good men and true, but most of them remained to the end so little distinguished that about them we know not much more than the names. And even regarding the few who became men of light and leading what must we say? Where would the Church have been, and what would it have made of its world-wide commission, if to its Peter and John there had not, after the Lord's ascension, been presently added its Paul? Certainly it was, on the Messiah's part, a gallant venture of faith to make a start with such material. Yet the venture succeeded. The little community was faithful, in its simple-minded way, to its understanding of what its ascended Lord had meant it to be and to do. But for its faithfulness there would have been no Paul to bring it to definite consciousness of its supra-national character. Surely that is a justifiable assertion. For, had it not been for the virility and potential revolutionariness of the new religious movement started in Jerusalem by the apostles' simple witness-bearing, the Pharisees would not have become alarmed, and there would have been no Saul 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter.' And had it not been for the way in which the infant Church stood up to, and multiplied under, Saul's persecution, there would have been no 'pricks' of conscience for him to 'kick against,' and to keep on being lacerated by, until he became inwardly ready for that vision on the road to Damascus.

Grandly indeed was our Lord's brave venture of faith justified. Out of the most unpromising material He created a Church which deliberately took the whole world for its field, which out-faced and conquered and out-last-ed the Roman Empire, which held up the torch of faith and culture through the Dark Ages, and which, like a great, self-spreading banyan-tree, has from its

branches sent down roots into one heathen soil after another—roots which are already thickening into new trunks that will support as heavy a weight as the parent-stem. Such is the community of the Kingdom of God, Christ's New Israel, the people conscious of a transcendent mission by which they are at once humbled and rendered invincible.

## V

### COME, FACE WITH ME THE 'KARMA' OF HUMANITY

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL reference was made in the introductory chapter to the effect upon the author of being brought up against the Hindu concept of a transmigration founded on *karma*—brought up against it more particularly in its aspect as a putative solution of the problem of unmerited suffering. This conception is one of the most ancient of current Hindu beliefs. Although there are no traces of it in the Vedic hymns, it was already so firmly established before the rise of Buddhism that Gautāma did not dream of discarding it, in spite of its apparent incompatibility with his denial of the *ātman*. Instead of that he treated it as an unquestionable truth which required to have an expression worked out for it in terms of his own metaphysical principles. As regards the mode of origin of this Indian belief we are still in the realm of more or less plausible hypothesis. On the other hand, its persistent hold must certainly be due in large measure to its way of reconciling faith in cosmic justice with the seeming inequities of the human lot.

What does the term, *karma*, signify? As a mere word its meaning is simply action or deed. What we have to understand is the employment of this word as a predicate in such sentences as: 'This misfortune of mine is just my *karma*.' Every Christian is familiar with the Biblical warning, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.'<sup>1</sup> The Hindu would add: 'If it does not find you out in your present life, you will be reincarnated in order that it may find you out.' But the Hindu does more than add this. Besides filling out in this way your assertion that your sin will find you out, he generalises it. 'Sinning' is a particular species of the genus, 'acting'; and it is not only your sins that will find you out but your actions of every kind, good as well as bad. They will do so, the Hindu says, because the good fortune that fitly rewards a virtuous deed, and the ill fortune that fitly penalises an evil deed, are just the very deed

<sup>1</sup> Num. xxxii. 23.

(or *karma*) itself, working out its own constituent nature, its own constitutive reality. In meeting good or ill fortune I am finding my own past still present; I am meeting not another but myself. Corresponding to the proverb so familiar to the Christian, 'Be sure your sin will find you out,' there is for the Hindu a generalised saying that is equally familiar: 'As amongst a thousand cows a calf knows its mother, so the deed done before finds out the doer.' And, for the Vedantic type of spiritual-mindedness, the latter saying is, in its application to good deeds and bad alike, the essence of the weary burden of humanity. Both good deeds and bad necessitate reincarnation; and in the Hindu conception there is no authentic spiritual-mindedness that does not include a longing for something which reincarnation postpones—the longing to escape into an unimaginable discarnate reality of being in which there is neither agent nor patient.

Thus it is easy to understand how a simple word like *karma* can, when used predicatively, embody the important conception that between the quality of deeds, and the quality of their fruits in the doer's experience, there is an unbreakable continuity. There is, however, a complementary truth which is no less important—namely, that there must be a like continuity between the quality of a man's deeds and the quality of their fruits in *other people's* experience. Had Indian thought given equal attention to this complementary truth, the history of Hinduism might have been very different. The Indian form of the belief in transmigration is an elaboration of what is only a half-truth. The kind of result in which this working out of a half-truth has issued may be indicated sufficiently for the purposes of this chapter by quoting part of Deussen's sketch of the way in which the *karma*-transmigration belief is formulated in the Advaita Vedānta of Śāṅkara. 'The idea,' he writes, 'is this, that life, in quality as well as in quantity, is the accurately meted and altogether fitting expiation of the deeds of previous existence. This expiation takes place through *bhokṛitvam* and *karṣitvam* (enjoying and acting), where the latter is again inevitably converted into deeds which must be expiated anew in a subsequent existence, so that the clock-work of requital, in running down, always winds itself up again; and so on in perpetuity—unless there comes upon the scene the universal knowledge which . . . does not rest upon merit but breaks its way into

existence without connection therewith, to dissolve it utterly, to burn up the seeds of deeds and thus to render a continuance of the transmigration impossible for ever after.<sup>1</sup>

The grim doctrinal edifice which Hindu thought has thus constructed serves wider aims than that of providing a hypothesis capable of dealing with the enigma of unmerited suffering. Yet it can be turned to that use; and the fact that it can be turned to that use constitutes, for popular thought, a considerable part of its appeal. In dealing with the Hindu idea of transmigration from this point of view the Christian apologist has need to pick his steps warily. In face of the glaring inequities of our human lot Christian imagination has been too apt to seek refuge in a pictured heaven or hell of the future where there will be compensation cancelling the injustice. The Hindu mind has taken the bolder course of imagining a limitless past and arguing that, when account is taken of the entail of that past, it becomes evident that there is *no* present injustice needing to be cancelled. No man is getting, and by virtue of the cosmic order no man can get, what he has not individually deserved. That is indeed an effectively radical way of dealing with the apparent problem—far more thorough than the way which has been too congenial to Christian imagination. But the truly Christian way of dealing with the supposed problem is quite as radical as the Hindu way, and far more deeply moral. The Hindu declaration is: 'There is no problem, for there is no undeserved suffering.' The truly Christian declaration is: 'There is no problem, for it is right that there should be undeserved suffering.'

Individually unmerited suffering is no mystery; the frequency of its occurrence constitutes no moral enigma: that was, almost from the first, a fundamental element in the author's own presentation of the Gospel, and it continued to be so throughout his missionary career. Here, as the deliberate thesis of this fifth chapter, it is argued that this was rightly so, and that if the Gospel is to be declared in India with the maximum of challenging relevancy, it must be presented as directly assailing Hindu pre-conceptions at this point. We strike here a tenet which, if the Church in India is ever to formulate a Creed which is germane to its special situation, may well appear as one of its articles. The

<sup>1</sup> *System des Vedānta*, p. 381.





great historic Creeds were directed against contemporary forms of belief which had arguable pretensions to being Christian in character, but were judged by the Church to involve declension from the faith. Now, to maintain that God is not just unless His Providence treats every man exactly as he individually deserves is a tenet for the defence of which so many Old Testament citations are available that it may put forth a very specious claim to being Scriptural. Against it, therefore, there is need that a Christian Creed for India should include an article declaring it to be morally necessary that the just should suffer with and for the unjust.

Fundamental to the *karma*-transmigration idea is the moral pre-supposition that individually unmerited suffering would be an iniquitous phenomenon, and is, therefore, inconceivable in any universe that deserves to be called a moral order. Now my submission is that the fundamental Christian presupposition is the precise opposite; that individually unmerited suffering, so far from being a mysterious ethical anomaly, is precisely what cosmic justice requires in any universe into which sin has entered. And this thesis has a corollary in relation to the doctrine of reconciliation through the Cross of Christ, namely, that what calls for a careful *apologia* is not the Divine procedure of letting the curse of sin fall upon the guiltless Christ, but the human procedure of devising penalties that are intended for the guilty alone. What calls for no *apologia*—what has morally self-evident rightness—is the system which actually prevails in God's universe, namely, the system according to which the individual brother's sin must be wiped out in the human brotherhood's suffering.

Let me develop this theme first of all in a manner which, even if it does little more than skim the surface, I have found useful in arguing with controversially-minded Hindu friends. It has direct reference to the debating point which, in my early days as a Christian teacher, undergraduate Hindu students used to try to score against me by claiming that the Christian has on his hands a problem which, without the Hindu doctrine of transmigration, he cannot solve, the problem of reconciling the fact of unmerited suffering with belief in a just and benevolent Creator. In reply to that challenge I have often reasoned on this wise.

For the sake of clarity, I have been in the habit of saying, let us

treat of the matter by two stages. Let us consider, first, why there is suffering at all, and, second, why it bears such inexact relation to relative individual merit. And let us sharpen the issue to its acutest by supposing a Creator who is so benevolent that He has fashioned for man's habitation a universe possessing natural laws and properties carefully designed to place within reach of human endeavour every possible good and worthy end.

Even into such a universe suffering must enter as soon as man tries to use its laws and properties for the achievement of unworthy ends. For consider. The more painstakingly any appliance has been designed for one kind of purpose, the less fitted is it likely to be for serving purposes of a different kind. A simple instrument like a hammer is well designed for driving in nails, but by very reason of its simplicity of form it may take no scathe if used for the purpose of breaking an enemy's skull. Far otherwise is it the case with an intricately designed instrument. It is both inefficient and likely to receive injury if turned to any other use but that for which it was designed. Should you assail your enemy not with a hammer but by slinging your watch at his head, the watch would be unlikely to keep good time thereafter. Now the universe with its endless multiplicity of laws and properties is a surpassingly intricate bit of machinery. And if the Creator so designed the machinery of our universe that it would be perfectly adapted to the securing of every good purpose, the more certain was it not to work well if used by man for purposes that are evil. In such a universe suffering is inevitable as soon as there is sin. Hardship, frustration, calamity and pain are like the jarring and jolting of an intricate piece of machinery when it is being wrongly used.

The suffering which must result from employing the universe's laws and properties to further ends for which they were not designed can be no exclusive concern of the responsible parties only. This is the second point to be established. Suppose that some member of the crew of a vessel plays pranks with its ship's compass, and in consequence the vessel is wrecked. Will the culprit be the only person to suffer? And how can we suppose that if foolish or wicked men play pranks with the intricately planned powers and properties of the universe in which we are life-passengers, it is going to be only they who will pay the penalty?

Assuredly not. And it is a good thing that this is impossible. It is a good thing that the world is so much of a unity as to make this impossible. Without that uniformity, and that intricately interlaced pattern of action and reaction, which renders the universe a unitary whole, it would be impossible, by discovering what the properties of matter are in one place, to know what they are everywhere; it would be impossible to make far-reaching purposes and plans; and it would be impossible to devise instruments so extraordinarily useful as deep-sea cables and wireless transmitters and radios and aeroplanes and so on. Unquestionably it is a good thing that the world is a unity. But *because* the world is that kind of a unity, and *because* God has endowed this unity of a world with powers and properties designed for the achievement of good ends, it follows that if any one of its inhabitants uses those powers and properties for bad ends, many others of its inhabitants may have undeservingly to suffer along with him. Individually unmerited suffering is, therefore, not a fact that reflects injuriously upon the character of the Creator. It is a penalty inevitably consequent upon the very benevolence of His creative design, and it is a penalty which is worth paying. Suffering that one does not individually deserve may be a most unwelcome experience, but life in a universe the laws and properties of which were not designed for good ends, and where Nature had no uniformity, would be immeasurably worse.

At this point in my argument I might very naturally be met by a retort from the Hindu side. It might be represented to me that it is just the very truth of my reasoning that renders the hypothesis of transmigration necessary. If each individual soul is incarnated only once, then by consequence of the unity of the universe its share of joy and sorrow will of course be determined by the quality not of its own conduct alone but of the conduct of all the incarnated souls. But this, even if it be a penalty worth paying, is a breach of the principle of justice. Now the hypothesis of transmigration eliminates injustice altogether. Within the limits of a single incarnation there can be—for the reasons which my argument developed—no complete squaring of the individual's experience with his individual merits. But the hypothesis of repeated incarnations allows for a squaring of accounts in the long run. Hinduism teaches that after a man dies, his soul is sent back

into the world over and over again, fitted out each time with a new and different body and supplied with different circumstances. These are so selected as to ensure that any excess or defect in his past share of deserved good or ill fortune will be made up to him in the ordinary course of events, without need for supernatural interference. In this way, by a moral law of the working of the process of reincarnation, it is made certain that, on the whole and in the long run, every man will experience exactly as much of pain and sorrow as he individually deserves and exactly as much good fortune as is his personally merited due.

If I am faced with such a rejoinder as I have here supposed, what is to be my reply? In effect, my reply would be: 'If such a system of world-government as that is what you regard as justice, then save me from such justice!' It is a reply which I have often made. I have challenged my Hindu friends to think a second time and then say whether they would really like to live in a universe which was governed by a moral law that every one must experience exactly what he deserves. For we have to remember that such a law must cut both ways. It would certainly guard me against suffering in the long run through other people's sins, but it would equally prevent me from benefiting in the long run from other people's good deeds. And—what is still worse—it would prevent other people from benefiting from my good deeds. So it would mean that all endeavour of mine to be kind and helpful to others could not, in the long run, make any difference to their well-being. Should I succeed, by a bit of self-sacrifice, in winning for another man a little more happiness than he has strictly merited, then the law of such a universe would make it certain that in another incarnation he would suffer a little more pain than he deserved, so as to redress the balance. Or if, by selfish deeds of mine, I prevented him from getting, in his present life, as much happiness as he deserved, then in the long run the balance would be restored by his getting, in another incarnation, more happiness than he deserved. Surely life in a universe like that, a universe where it is certain that no kind acts of mine can be of any advantage to others in the long run, would be a dreadfully uninspiring life! Surely it is a far greater privilege to live in what at least appears to be the kind of universe God has actually placed us in, a universe where certainly we are liable to suffer undeservingly in

consequence of other people's sins, but where we can render effectual service to others, both now and in the long run! Can it be counted an injustice on the Creator's part if He has granted us that privilege?

The line of reasoning of which the foregoing is a rough and ready version, designed for popular use, serves at the best a very limited purpose. Against any Hindu controversialist who may assert that without the hypothesis of transmigration the seeming inequities of the human lot must constitute an insoluble enigma, it does show that the occurrence of unmerited suffering casts no aspersion on the Creator's benevolence, since without it His universe would lack the indispensable value of being a unity and must also stultify all altruism by making it impossible for men really to help one another. But to show this is only to reconcile the occurrence of unmerited suffering with the *benevolence* of God, whereas the Hindu demands that it be reconciled also with His *justice*. In respect of that further point all that has so far been said has been to exclaim: 'If the justice of God be of a kind which requires to establish a scheme of transmigration ruled by *karma*, then save me from such justice.' But to desire to escape from justice affords no proof that the justice is not just. Therefore we must probe deeper if we are to be able to declare the Gospel in a manner that is completely relevant to Hindu thought about *karma*. We must enquire whether it is not merely a benevolent but a righteous provision that the just shall suffer with and for the unjust.

In putting this question I have used the phrase, 'a righteous provision,' instead of 'a just provision.' This is not because I do not mean 'a just provision,' but only because 'just' is an ambiguous term. It at once tends to bring us into the circle of ideas connected with civil and criminal 'justice.' A legal penalty is one that has been invented solely for the purpose of penalising an offender; and since it has been expressly so designed, it is, of course, quite 'unjust' to inflict it on any one else. But this is unjust simply because a penalty, in the legal sense of the term, is an artificial infliction meant for an offender and for no one else. If we take the word 'just' in the broader sense of 'righteous,' and use it to cover every way of treating wrong-doing that can commend itself to an enlightened conscience, then it is no longer self-evident that a

'just' cosmic order must be one in which an offence brings suffering only on the offender. On the contrary, the author finds his own mind driven to affirm that the universe would be, in the broad sense of the terms, not a just but an unjust system, that is, it would be a universe of which we could not rationally and morally approve, if it were so false to the principle of continuity as not to ensure that the innocent shall suffer with and for the guilty.

Without the suffering of all men, guilty or guiltless, there can be no expiation of sin. Why? Because we are and ought to be our brothers' keepers. Because nothing good can be really perfect unless it is a common good. Because no universe can be worthy of God which is not integrally one throughout, making men and angels and God one in benefit and one in penalty. In a word, because the fundamental principle of continuity is as indispensable in the spiritual realm as science proclaims it to be in the natural.

Now sin is the acted denial of all this. The sinful will is a will to flout the principle of moral continuity. It is this in two ways, for it is both an attempt to snatch good out of what is morally bad, and an attempt to find good for self in what is bad for others. The principle of continuity requires that what is good or bad in moral quality shall be good or bad in its working—good or bad in its total consequential potency, and that what is really good or bad for one shall be really good or bad for all. But to be willing to sin is to shut the eyes to both these necessities. It is to desire to believe, and to act as though one believed, in the possibility of divorcing personal from universal good and present quality from permanent consequential potency.

In God's universe penalties automatically follow wrong-doing because the momentary cannot be divorced from the permanent—because actions which are bad in their present moral quality cannot possibly be good in their permanent consequential potency. But if the penalties fell on the sinner alone, this would show that the other half of his wilful error was no error but the truth. It would show that in God's universe what is bad for self need not be bad for others; from which it would follow that what is hurtful to others may be good for self, so that even in God's universe it is possible to play a lone hand. The suffering of the guiltless is the nailing of that lie to the counter. The first World War moved Ernest Raymond to write that touching story, *Tell England*. In it

we read the dying words of a young wounded officer, a lovable character in spite of obvious faults. Between his gasps he just managed to whisper: "You know, padre—I was thinking—while you prayed. I suppose I've led a selfish life—seeking my own ends—but, by Jove, I've had my good time—and am ready to pay for it—if I must." His eyes flashed defiantly. "If God puts me through it, I shan't whine." But no man can pay for his sins by himself; he can only share in a reckoning which, though it be for his private sins, is yet a common reckoning. The readiness to face in one's own person the whole reckoning for one's personal sins is the good side of selfishness; but it cannot be gratified in God's world. If it could, then to call men brothers would be a lie. And a universe in which we were not all brothers would be a universe unworthy of God.

In gazing on the Cross of Christ we are watching God punishing the sin of man, but not in the sense that we are witnessing a special exaction that is additional to the moral consequences which it is sin's intrinsic nature to precipitate upon the world. In the Gospel story, taken as it stands, no such idea is inculcated. Many readers have seemed to themselves to find it there; but is not that because, expecting for doctrinal reasons to find it there, they have unwittingly read it into the narrative for themselves? Taken by itself, the story shows an enterprise of wondrous grandeur and devotion which, because it was adventured in and for a sinful world, encountered an opposition which had behind it the momentum of centuries of perverted human thinking and perverted human willing. Under this dread impact the grand Adventure had to go down in seeming ruin; only through the costliest act of faith and surrender ever attempted could it snatch victory out of this very defeat. And the story shows us Jesus Christ facing the tragedy as a mysterious dispensation of Providence foretold in the Scriptures rather than as a luminously necessary legal exaction. The cry of forsakenness on the Cross is not the cry of one who feels God visiting him in judicial displeasure; it is the cry of One who finds His dearest hopes left unprotected from that ruin which human sin has empowered 'the Prince of this world' to bring upon them.

Readiness and desire to pay by oneself the full reckoning for one's sin is the first step toward moral rehabilitation; but it is



only the first step. It means that one has given up wishing to divorce the momentary from the permanent, and has begun, instead, to share the moral demand that what is bad in its present moral quality shall be bad also in its consequential potency. But this is all the change of heart that it implies. It does not mean that one has given up the self-centredness which makes the sinner wish to play a lone hand. Until we have abandoned this self-centredness as well, there is not complete repentance.

For true repentance does not mean mere sorrow for sin. It means what the Greek New Testament calls *metanoia*—a change of mind and heart, a radical abandonment of the attitude by which the sin now repented of was made for us a possible act. The self-centredness must go which rendered our sin capable of being willed. And it has not absolutely gone until our consciences sorrowfully approve of others suffering along with us for that which not they, but we, were responsible. So, until we are sadly willing that the guiltless shall help to pay our reckoning, there is no perfect *metanoia*; sin's self-centred will is not yet utterly dead, and there is no complete expiation or wiping out of sin.

When our consciences find peace through the blood of Christ, we are beginning to perceive this painful fitness in the suffering of the guiltless. But there is more than this in Christ's crucifixion. Were this all, it would be solemn tragedy alone and not a deed wherein to glory. But if in the Crucified we have met God face to face, then we know that the universe is not merely a place in which, willingly or unwillingly, each brother's sin must be wiped out in his brethren's sorrow. If the Crucified be God's very Self incarnated, then at the heart of things we have found a principle not only nobler than the legal kind of 'justice' but nobler also than uncomplaining submission to a common reckoning. In the Cross of Christ the Incarnate, the universe reveals itself as a place whose deepest law is this, that sin shall be not merely expiated but swallowed up in a blaze of moral glory.

Christ's incarnation unto death is no mere passive suffering of the guiltless. The blow which felled Him to the ground was one which smote Him *because* He was on the great Adventure bent. From that root sprang its superlative agony. He was the Heart and Mind of God come out of the mysterious Beyond, impelled to vindicate its love against the slur of man's selfish unbelief by



placing itself at man's mercy,<sup>1</sup> lavishing itself upon man with an abandon that disdained all self-protection, being resolved to scorch away man's vileness and conquer his self-centred will by sheer utterness of giving. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' The universe is a moral universe, and its Creator's honour is utterly vindicated, only because the universe is a place where sin provokes a blaze of moral glory, a consuming, regenerating fire of outraged, purifying love. Christ's guiltless suffering was certainly part of the common or jointly borne expiation of sin. But if His *suffering* was expiatory, what had power to regenerate the soul and reconcile man with God was not the suffering itself but *the act which cost the suffering*—the free, impassioned act of Self-incarnation unto death.

In the light of all this how clear it becomes that if cosmic 'justice' were merely of the legal kind, it would be a morally insufficient way of dealing with wrong-doing. Such 'justice' may help to teach the sinner that the momentary cannot be divorced from the permanent, and that actions which are bad in their present moral quality cannot be good in their permanent consequential tendency. But it cannot teach him that the common good is the only real good, that all human beings are actually one brotherhood, and that no one can play a lone hand, sinning by himself and paying for it by himself.

When, through the share which the guiltless must accept in the reckoning, the sinner learns this lesson, and when, by consequence, he has acquired a horror of the self-centredness which can bear such dreadful fruit, his sin is dead. The past may contain the dead corpse of his wrong-doing but its spirit has fled. Through the penalty shared by the guiltless there has been made possible an expiation, a nullifying of the evil thing.

But is there yet full reconciliation or atonement? Who that possesses a heart could be entirely 'at-one-with' God in respect of his repented sins if this were all the story? Who could approve of a deity of that kind—a cold moral Reason that acquiesces in the moral logic of a universality of disaster issuing from an individuality of transgression? But that is *not* the whole story. Nature and History are the handiwork and the rule of a God of

<sup>1</sup> cf. the teaching, in Matt. v. 38, 39, that the impulse to turn the other cheek is the 'fulfilment' or perfecting of the retributive impulse.

impassioned love. Not content that, by the cost to Himself in disappointment and sympathetic pain, He should have a passive share in the common reckoning for the deeds of sinners, He *goes to meet* the onset of that reckoning, gathering in its mightiest impact upon Himself and, by the magnificence of His Self-spending, robbing it, not indeed of its painfulness, but of its power to destroy. For love such as this redeems men from the hold of sin over the will by awakening an answering devotion. And because, having learned to love the Incarnate God, we long to spend ourselves in service without limit, we can feel willing to accept from Him this His utterness of giving. We can feel 'at-one-with' God in respect of His way of treating sin and sinners. Our consciences can whole-heartedly approve of a universe in which the destructiveness of the entail of sin is, at infinite cost, transmuted into mere painfulness, and in which the wickedness of human deeds provokes a purifying, regenerative blaze of moral glory.

To conceive in this manner the reconciliation of man with God through the Cross of Christ is to remove the subject altogether from the range of ideas connected with forensic 'justice.' Surely that is much to be desired! Legal penalties are never the true reckoning for wrong. They are perhaps a defensible but certainly an artificial addition to the intrinsic penalties of wrong-doing. God's universe takes no heed of them, but goes on exacting its own penalties whether the criminal pays or escapes the reckoning which our human laws demand. Again, it is to a limited selection only from the many possible forms of wrong-doing that legal penalties are attached. Not socially alone, but morally, it would be disastrous if every bad act were legally punishable. Why, then, should we suppose it to be otherwise in the system of God's universe? Why should we suppose it to be morally right and needful for God, in the case of every sin without exception, to combine with its intrinsic evil fruitage a legally added penalty? Legally decreed punishments are simply a human institution, developed for social reasons of which most of us approve, but kept within very narrow limits. Such punishments are a socially protective device according to which, in the case of certain selected forms of wrong-doing, we refuse to be content with the natural or intrinsic penalties which all wickedness involves, and

add to them other penalties specially meant for the wrong-doer alone. In the case of legal penalties, therefore, it belongs to their very essence that they should be borne only by the guilty. Consequently, to suppose that what Christ bore for sinners was a legal kind of penalty, an infliction specially decreed for the guilty by some Divine penal code, would be to make of the Cross a moral enormity, instead of a means of atonement that vindicates to our consciences the righteousness of God's forgiveness.

That the reflective conscience is dogged by a certain uneasiness regarding voluntarily exacted requital is evident from the amount of attention which ethical thought has given to theories of punishment. In spite of the instinctive quality which characterises the retributive impulse every theory of punishment is apt to be a more or less laboured *apologia*. How can it be right, one asks, to return injury for injury? If that is ever right, under what conditions can it be right? Suppose that the answer suggested is that it can be right only when the injury that is returned is not meant as injury but as a helping by hurting, an educative expedient. But if so, it ceases to be in any real sense an equivalent return or repayment in kind. Moreover, to secure that the hurting shall actually be a helping is very difficult. The idea is that if we make the criminal *feel*, by the exaction of an equivalent, in the way in which his victim felt by suffering the original injury, we may help him to *see* his crime as the victim and the general conscience saw it. But that hoped-for result is so uncertain that, in practice, the 'educative' theory of punishment leads to methods of reclamation that are scarcely recognisable as 'punishment.' Equally tenuous is the connection, in practical working, between the 'deterrent' theory of punishment and the idea of merited requital. For a really apposite defence of anything so spontaneous as the desire to punish we must fall back upon its psychological root, and say that, whatever secondary purposes punishment may be made to serve, its primary function is not to administer retribution or requital but to express reprobation. As a condition of psychological health strong emotions must devise for themselves outlets in expressive action, and no emotional state has greater need of this than the perturbation which the general mind is thrown into by witnessing or hearing of serious crime. Of this emotional

disturbance one element is reprobation, and this element punishment expresses. But the defect of punishment is that while it affords an outlet to this emotional element, and to others which are less admirable, there are elements that ought to enter into the emotional reaction against crime for which it provides no expressive symbolism. For there is no situation so tragic as that of being a bad man. Therefore pity and a passionate desire to reclaim the criminal at any cost ought to blend with horror and indignation in the emotional reaction which imperiously claims expression. By the tragic drama of an Incarnation unto death, enacted in a world where each individual brother's sin is paid for in the human brotherhood's suffering, God fashioned for Himself the single perfectly expressive way of reacting against sin.

This chapter may be fitly concluded by reverting to the Hebrew saying made use of at the outset to introduce the Hindu conception that is expressed by the predicative employment of the term *karma* or action. 'Be sure,' said Moses, 'your sin will find you out.' On the face of it the *karma*-transmigration concept would seem to be an acceptance of that Mosaic proverb, but in real fact it is its negation. If my sin is really to find me out, I must perceive that it is *my* sin and how horribly sinful it is. But according to the *karma*-transmigration concept the sin that is finding me out is always a sin of the nature of which I have no knowledge because it was committed by me in an unremembered previous incarnation. Such an experience is no moral searching of the conscience. Only as I find out my sin's sinfulness can I be morally found out by my sin. And the supremely adequate way of being found out by my individual sin is when I discover that in God's judgment it can be morally dealt with in no lesser way than by His own Incarnation unto death.



## VI

### PREACH THE LOVE WHICH IS A CONSUMING FIRE

**T**HIS concluding chapter is concerned with two topics which, although distinct, may be profitably considered side by side. One is the comparative absence from Hindu religious experience of what Christian theology means by the term, 'conviction of sin.' The other topic is the partial decline, within the missionary impulse as felt to-day, of a conviction of the urgency of the task of carrying the Gospel to every creature. That there has been such a decline is an impression which it is difficult to resist even if one looks no further back than to the fervour of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union in the days when it coined its watchword, 'The Evangelisation of the World in This Generation.' And the surmise suggests itself that this decline may be not unconnected with a diminished presence in the Church of to-day of the conviction of sin. But how are we to declare the full challenge of the Gospel in India if at this point we have grown insensitive to its full challenge to ourselves?

To recover the sense of urgency we do not need to return to nightmare visions of a hell-fire remorselessly awaiting the millions of the unevangelised. But we do need a freshened apprehension of how necessarily the wages of sin is death, and how sheer is the miracle by which even the Gospel believer can be saved from earning those wages. Through our inner life of faith there does need to sound less infrequently the startling note which rings out in the acute concern of those words of St. Paul: 'if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.' Even by an apostle who gloried in the Gospel the gate that leadeth unto life was continually found to be of a difficult straitness. What, then, of unevangelised multitudes who have finished a life-time's experience of the hardening, deadening influence of a world that was not interpreted to them by the Cross of Christ? Even if somehow the gate that leads to life is posthumously shown them, must it not then have for them a surpassing straitness? Far be it

from me to ask any one to surrender the comfort of the 'Universalist' hope. But is not our entertainment of that hope in danger of being too facile? From the doom which consists in 'perishing' there can be no escape except as there is an escape from sinfulness. And rescue from sinfulness remains a miracle even in souls which have heard and welcomed the Gospel in their tender years. Is it not, then, all too evident that the 'King's business' of a world-wide evangelism upon which the Church has been sent is a business that 'requireth haste'?

According to the New Testament narratives, when our Lord had occasion to refer to the ultimate doom of the unfaithful, He did not wholly deny Himself use of the traditional imagery, an imagery derived originally from the primitive arrangements which had prevailed in the Hebrew capital for sanitary disposal of refuse and unwanted corpses. But more characteristic was another figure which may have been of His own coining, and which must at least have been vivified for Him by recollections from His childhood—the figure of 'the outer darkness.' In Nazareth there was no street-lighting, and no windows pierced the house-walls which abutted on the street. And it may well be that some childish memory of a belated guest whose knocking on the door remained long unheard, and who was kept impotently fuming in the outer darkness while the assembled party within were enjoying a brightly lighted feast, became for the youthful Jesus an unforgettable symbol of the fate of the spiritual castaway. What need can there be of quasi-physical fires to sharpen such a torment of loss as exclusion from 'the marriage-supper of the Lamb'?

In a richly suggestive booklet on *The Problem of Pain*, Mr. C. S. Lewis has remarked that when we speak of God as Love, we are too apt to mean by love just 'kindness—the desire to see others than the self happy; not happy in this way or in that, but just happy. What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, "What does it matter so long as they are contented?" We want, in fact,' Mr. Lewis continues, 'not so much a Father in heaven as a grandfather in heaven—a senile benevolence who, as they say, "liked to see young people enjoying themselves," and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might truly be said at the end of each day, "a good

time was had by all.”<sup>1</sup> Not such is that Divine Love which challenges us in the Gospel. In the very same New Testament in which it is written that God is Love, it is also written: ‘Our God is a consuming fire.’

We have sore need of realising how requisite are both these affirmations to set forth the abiding attitude of God to that strange contradiction which every man is. They do not depict two alternating moods in the one God, a tender, cherishing mood and a wrathful, destructive mood. They are not moods at all but His changeless essential being. *Because* He loves there is in Him an implacableness; *because* He cherishes He is also a consuming fire. Without an understanding of this there is no true knowledge of God. And in a general way it is not difficult to understand. We can see that it must be true of God, as it is true of human nature, that to love one thing is to detest its opposite, and that to be deeply opposed to one thing is to look with warm appreciation on whatever is contrary to it in character. Here is a man who is my valued friend. How can I help being an opponent of one who is his enemy? Now God is the greatest of our friends; the whole Bible proves that. And Sin is our supreme enemy; that too is Bible truth. How, then, can God, our Friend, be other than the Enemy of our enemy? How can He do aught else than hate, and be ‘a consuming fire’ against, the sin that is busy working our ruin? Yes, this we seem able to understand; but we do not penetrate its complexity. We think of sin as an abstraction, and so we complacently say: ‘God loves the sinner but hates the sin.’ But to say this is to speak too simply. Sin is not a *thing*; it is *a man sinning*. It is a man expressing his very nature in evil, shameful acts. And so to say that God loves a man but hates the man’s sin is to say that God both loves and hates the man; it is to say that towards the man himself God is both tender, ardent love and flaming, consuming fire. Even in our highest, holiest moments there is a ‘wrath of God’ against us; for, as it is said in Isaiah, even ‘our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ And even in our vilest moments God loves us; for our vileness is something good corrupted, and that is why it is sinful. To be really Christian, to walk daily hand-in-hand with God-in-Christ, is an exacting, searching experience. It is an experience that is soothing but also scorching, quickening

<sup>1</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, p. 28, Geoffrey Bles Ltd., The Centenary Press.



but also consuming. 'You only,' said Jehovah, speaking through the prophet Amos to the Chosen People—'you only have I known of all the families of the earth; *therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities.'

We realise all this far too little; and for that we have no excuse since it is in our Bible. Indian religion also here falls short, but with better excuse since in its sacred heritage there is that which can militate against a full realisation. Consider first the more ancient type of reflective religion in India, the more pantheistic or monistic type where meditation concentrates not on a personal Īsvara but on the impersonal Brahman, equally present in all things. Is it not obvious that the more vivid the impression which this meditation induces of the incomparable universal Brahman, the more unimportant does man appear in his seeming-separate being, and *therefore* the more unimportant his sins as well as his virtues? There is only one thing that can prevent this result. It will be prevented only if the gravity of the sin is measured not by the stature of the sinner but by the quality of the sinned-against. Of all misdeeds it is sin against confiding love that most inescapably awakens horror and a sense of appalling guilt. And the sins of the finite can be felt as involving an infinite demerit when they are conceived as breach of trust perpetrated against an infinite love.

For this reason it is mainly in the Bhakti-literature that we find any uprush of surging penitence and shame for sin. For the personal Īsvara is a God of love, and of love for the individual. It is of pure undeserved grace that He inclines to the lost, and out of their infinite number raises His own to Himself. Of the impassioned concern of the Supreme Being for insignificant man one could hardly desire a more moving expression than in lines which Rudolf Otto has quoted: <sup>1</sup>

*'But when was heard by Bhagavat this purpose of the soul,  
Of this surrendering, longing, fleeing soul,  
Joy shone upon His countenance—*

*Infinite saving joy, the goal of goals, the highest of all goods.'*

In religious conceptions like these there is spiritual food enough to nourish and develop an overwhelming penitence. Nevertheless

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 50.



even Bhakti-religion does not give to the guilt-consciousness the place it holds in a really Biblical Christianity.

In Christian thought, says Otto,<sup>1</sup> the primary meaning of the 'rescue of the lost' is 'rescue from sin and guilt, from the terrors of conscience smitten by God and His holiness.' For India, on the other hand, its primary meaning is 'rescue from the bonds of *samsāra*, from the misery of this world of wandering, the torturing "wheel of birth and rebirth." This is not to say, of course, that the idea of sinful fault and the pressure of conscience is absent. For 'moksha denotes release from enchainment not only to a transitory and suffering form of existence but to a *worthless* and *unworthy* form.' The truth of the matter is that 'both religions have each the controlling ideas of the other as subordinate elements: the later Bhakti-religion has profound ideas of forgiveness and intimate renewal, and the Christian religion profound ideas of soul and the life of soul, of transitoriness, and of that which endures for ever.'<sup>2</sup> But a longing for serenity rather than for sanctity remains the most typical aspiration of the Indian religious consciousness. Otto neatly epitomises the difference when he says that 'Christianity is the religion of the conscience *per substantiam*, Bhakti-religion that religion *per accidens*.'<sup>3</sup>

This difference between Biblical Christianity and even the Bhakti form of Indian religion is one which it is impossible not to feel, but which it is difficult to define without exaggerating it or making it too clear-cut. In what is it rooted? It was remarked a short distance back that of all misdeeds it is sins against confiding love that most inescapably awaken horror and a sense of appalling guilt. In that remark I would stress the word, 'confiding.' To play false to a trustful comrade is the final extreme of despicableness. Now, how great soever may be the love towards man with which the *bhakta* credits *Īśvara*, there is not the same scope as the Bible provides for conceiving it as a confiding love, the love of a trusting Leader for his trustful comrades. The Old Testament provides scope for this through its basic concept of Jahveh as a God who graciously makes 'covenant' with man. And the New Testament provides it through that concept which we have seen to be both lacking in and alien from Indian religious thought, the concept of the Kingdom of God as an end which is a goal of

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 87 f.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 104.

endeavour not alone for man but for God. Because of that concept our meeting with God Incarnate is a meeting with One who, when He sets forth carrying His cross, counts on his disciples picking up their crosses too. To shirk doing so is not merely to fall short in moral attainment; it is the nigh unforgivable act of breaking troth. By virtue of its concept of the Kingdom of God the Christian Gospel has that which, before the crisis of conversion, can change mere sorrow over moral defect into terrors of conscience, and after conversion can change those terrors into the impassioned self-condemnation of one who feels as though he could never accord to himself his own forgiveness for those deeds for which he knows himself to be amazingly forgiven of God. How is this so? How is the possibility of this double transmutation rooted in the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God? First, that concept presents God as active upon the terrestrial plane, battling there passionately for righteousness. Discovery of one's turpitude, therefore, becomes something more than consciousness of passive moral defect; it becomes the appalling discovery that one has been ranged in rebellious battle against the infinite holiness and majesty of God. Second, when at the crisis of conversion the rebel accepts the incredible offer of immediate enlistment as loyal recruit, terror departs but self-abasement grows deeper. The trustfulness of the Divine Leader who takes the rebel as His recruit and lowly comrade reflects a new light back upon the latter's whole past life. He realises that from his earliest days all God's dealings with him have been Divine ventures of trust. No possession, no endowment, that he has ever had has been his own; all were hopefully assigned to him in stewardship. Without exception, therefore, all his past sins have involved that basest of all basenesses, breach of trust, the flouting of a confidingness of love. For this past shamefulness he has now, incredibly, been forgiven, but how can he ever pardon it himself? He can only seek refuge from contemplation of his own shame in a self-forgetful, exultant wonderment at the moral glories of his Redeemer. Henceforth his soul shall make her boast in God alone.

There can be no complete fulfilment of our commission to declare in India the challenge of the Gospel save as we receive grace to awaken the Indian soul to the utter devastatingness of

God's judgment upon guilt and sin. Full awakening to the horror of sin can come only at the foot of the Cross of Christ. That Cross is the consummate revelation of 'the wrath of God against all ungodliness.' But it is the revelation also of so much else; and of its total meaning its revelation of a Divine 'Wrath' or holy intolerance is apt to be the least welcomed and the slowest learned. How shall we best help the soul of India to be arrested by vision of the intolerant holiness that is in the nature of God?

I do not think direct preaching of terrors of judgment holds much promise of effectiveness. In my Madras experience there was a little incident which, although it occurred some thirty years ago, remains indelibly in my memory. As one means of establishing touch with English-educated Hindus or Muhammadans, the Madras Danish Mission maintained a Reading Room and ran courses of weekly lectures on religious, philosophical or social topics. At the close of each lecture the meeting was thrown open for discussion, and although the lecturer might be either a Christian or a non-Christian, the task of presiding at the meeting and summing up at the end of the discussion was habitually assigned to a Christian. I have forgotten what was the topic of lecture on the occasion to which I refer, but the line which the subsequent discussion tended to take was such as to move a Danish missionary who was present to rise and testify to his own solemn belief in a Hell that awaited all who should reject the Gospel. This solemn announcement was greeted with a spontaneous burst of laughter. Now I should have found nothing memorable in this if the laughter had been angry, jeering mockery. But it administered a rebuff far more gruelling than mockery could have done through the patent fact that it expressed simple, good-natured amusement. In contrast with this first-hand memory I will set an incident of which I know only by report. If I remember rightly, it occurred in the experience of a Y.M.C.A. worker among Hindu students. There were two young men with whom he had established very comradely relations and of whom, as a result of his influence, it might truly be said that they were 'not far from the Kingdom of God.' Yet all his endeavours failed to carry them further until one day, in the course of conversation, they discovered that this friend of theirs, who liked and admired them, nevertheless sorrowfully regarded them as on the road to

final ruin. This discovery so startled them that forthwith they became purposeful enquirers and in the end converted men. If I have related this story correctly, what is its moral? Certainly not that one should begin an evangelistic approach with the terrors of judgment. In the case I have reported, that only intensified an impression already made. If one may venture a guess, it would be that the young men's discovery that in their friend's mind liking and respect could go hand in hand with belief in their worthiness of damnation made it possible for them to credit the Bible's teaching that God's nature is not only love but 'consuming fire.' That had remained for their minds an unimaginable and incredible conjunction until they saw it reflected in the attitude toward themselves of a friend of whose love they were certain.

Dr. Kraemer has recorded it as the general experience of missionaries in Africa that 'not the consciousness of sin brings men to Christ, but the continued contact with Christ brings them to consciousness of sin.'<sup>1</sup> I think it likely that most Indian missionaries would make report to a similar effect. Just because lost sheep are really lost, the Good Shepherd can find them only at the point where they actually are, not at the point where they ought to be. He finds the Indian sheep tangled in a helpless longing for serenity rather than sanctity, oppressed by enchainment to the 'wheel' of birth and rebirth rather than by terrors of a guilty conscience. Finding them there, He gives them deliverance there. He wins their trust by meeting the need which they feel, being confident that as they follow Him, they will develop a consciousness of the needs they ought to feel.

It would seem, then, that if we are to help India to realisation of the intolerant holiness that is in the nature of God, it will be more by indirection than by directness that we shall succeed. But our proclamation of the glorious mercy that shines out from the Cross may hinder rather than help the convert's own discovery of the 'consuming fire' which burns within the Love Divine unless we ourselves, who proclaim the mercy, are never able to forget the 'wrath.' It may serve, therefore, as a not unfitting conclusion for our course of study if we let our minds dwell for a while on the intolerant holiness that is in God, and on the consequent urgency of declaring to all men the way of escape from

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 345.

that sinfulness for which there can be no destiny but 'the outer darkness.' As remarked at the beginning of the present chapter, I cannot help believing that, if not among missionaries, certainly among the rank and file of the supporters of foreign missions, there has been some weakening of the sense of the urgency of the missionary enterprise, and I surmise that this has been not unconnected with the disappearance of the old nightmare certainty of a hell of fire awaiting the unevangelised. But even if we indignantly tear up the pictures of a hell of fire, can we do the same with our Lord's picture of an 'outer darkness' of exclusion and loss? For it must remain eternally true that into the New Jerusalem there can enter naught that defileth. And if the expulsion from our human nature of all defiling fondness for evil ways be hard of attainment even for those who know and believe the Gospel, how immeasurably harder of attainment must it be for those who have never heard 'the truth as it is in Jesus'?

In the preceding chapter claim was made that when we free our minds from the range of ideas belonging to human penal systems, it becomes morally self-evident that for individual sin there ought to be a corporate reckoning, and that it is right for the just to suffer with and for the unjust. According to the Christian Gospel, however, this is not the whole story. In addition to this corporate reckoning there is, for the finally impenitent, an exaction which is absolutely individual. Only it is not 'punishment'; it is something much graver.

Let us first consider for a moment our human usage. By sentence of our criminal courts we punish a man for his bad actions, but we do not punish him for being a bad man. We punish him for *doing* evil; we do not punish him for *loving* evil. Yet surely the latter is the far more serious, the far more horrible thing! Then, why this difference?

Partly the reason is that punishment is here of no use. It may persuade the bad man to decide never again to do the bad deed, and it may help him to keep his resolve. But punishment cannot keep the bad man from *loving* evil. It cannot persuade him to be done with all liking for what is bad. Or at least, if it does, the resolve is vain, for no mere act of will can either abolish or create love, whether of evil or of good. It is 'the expulsive power of a new affection' that drives out love of evil.

This reference to the limits of will-power leads to a second reason why, although we punish the bad man for his bad deed, we do not punish him for being a bad man. Our legal penalties are intended solely for the individual who is to blame, and can we 'blame' a man for loving evil? We may loathe or despise him for it, but are we at liberty to blame him for it? Is he able, by an act of will, to give it up? It is true that there lies in his past a responsibility for the strength of his present love of evil. If he had controlled his past actions, if he had systematically checked his earlier wrong impulses, and kept them from issuing in wrong deeds, then his inclination to evil would never have grown to possess the strength it now has; he would not have loved evil so much as he does. That past, however, is past. It is what it is; and with that past behind him he is, at the present moment, quite unable to love evil less than he does. So, if we think clearly, what we 'blame' him for is the past actions which have developed his love of evil; we do not 'blame' him for what he cannot at the moment help—for that present love of evil which the past has chained round his neck. For that we may justly 'despise' him; at that in him we may rightly shudder; but we do not 'punish' him for it because we cannot 'blame' him for it. Instead of punishing him we get rid of him as far as we may. If we have to live with him, we do so only on distant terms; we deny him our intimacy.

All this is man's way with man. What is God's way with man? What is God's way with men as *lovers* of evil? One of the tenderest verses in the New Testament affords us a heart-shaking part of the answer. It is there written that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not 'perish.' The doom that loomed ahead was radical. He that goes on loving evil must be excluded from the life everlasting. This is a moral necessity. There is no way out.

The teleological character of the Christian Gospel renders this inevitable. God would not be God if He were not planning for His world a glorious and blessed and holy consummation; and a holy world is one in which there is no room for lovers of the bad. In the Bible picture of the New Jerusalem in which the world's long story reaches its goal, the golden streets and the pearly gates may be only poetic symbols, but there is nothing merely symbolic in the prediction that 'there shall no wise enter into it any thing that

defileth'; and what can be more defiling than a liking for evil, a love of sin?

It is not here a question of blameworthiness. We may plead that for our evil likings we are not wholly to blame. We may plead that we were born with a twist towards evil; that from the first there was in us a fund of 'original sin'; that influences for which we were not responsible have operated to nourish and develop this original bad legacy. But all that is beside the mark. Whatever may have been the previous history of our love of evil; whatever may have caused it or strengthened it, still, so long as we have any of it at all, we are not fit for admission to the perfect world, since our presence there would mean that it was *not* perfect. Even though our exclusion from it wrings the loving heart of God, He cannot and must not admit us there.

Is there any way of escape? So long as there lingers in us any vestige of the liking for evil, there is none. The guiltless Son of God may take on Himself an overwhelming share of the common punishment of our deeds of shame. By the magnificent spirit in which He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, He created spiritual forces which so transformed the working out of the penal consequences of sin as to transmute their quality and make their ultimate fruitage not evil but good. But even if He could have taken on Himself the whole penalty; even if He could have provided a complete propitiation for every sinful act, the unrepented sins as well as those which are repented of, still, so long as love of sin continued—so long as there was any lingering inclination to evil—heaven must stay closed against it: there must remain the same doom—to perish.

Does the miracle of conversion lay to rest, once for all, every haunting misgiving? Is the fear meaningless that though I have preached to others, I myself may be a castaway? In the third chapter above we were led to consider the marvellous rehabilitation of the will that comes to the rebel who hears Christ magnanimously enlisting him as a recruit. We realised how the Saviour's trusting of our untrustworthy selves, by taking us into His following and sending us on His errands, creates in us a new trustworthiness. We recognised how the discovery that God still believes in us fills us with new power to resist faithfully the allurements of evil. But not even this experience of a rehabilitated



will can render meaningless the fear of perishing. So long as the allurements which we now successfully resist remain really alluring; so long as we still have to struggle against a disposition to yield, there is evidently some liking still for evil, some love of sin; and for this heaven cannot make room. So the doom still appears to threaten. Can there be a way out?

Let us consider God's way of dealing with men as lovers of evil. He deals with them as, on earth, the Lord Jesus did. Unless we had seen it in Jesus, we could not have believed it possible. So incredible was the blending, in Him, of horror and love. We remember how His flashing denunciations of 'Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites' passed on, without a pause, into the heart-broken lament over Jerusalem—Jerusalem which contained these same hypocrites. We ordinary men and women do not punish the bad man for being bad but, so far as we can, we get rid of him, and if we have to live with him, we do so only on the most distant terms possible. But that is not God's way. God so loved the lovers of sin at whose foulness He shuddered that He took the completest way of getting near them. In the person of His only begotten Son He came as near them as He could. He lived with them, served them, turned to them the other cheek, died for them, so that by the intimacy of His nearness, with its tender love and flaming horror, He might scorch away their vileness, and melt their hardness of heart, and wither their love of evil, and choke its noisome growth by the rivalry of an up-springing new love for Himself. He could not bear that we should perish, so He came in the very Person of His Son.

Does our experience of this, God's incredibly generous way of attacking our love of things evil, confer an effortless immunity from all fear of making spiritual ship-wreck? Are we ever in a position to testify that the fellowship of Christ, and the regenerative power of His magnanimous trusting of the untrustworthy, has availed to root out of us all inclination toward what is bad? Or is it not rather the case too often that even when, through the new power of faithfulness which He creates, we successfully resist our evil likings, they still remain likings?

It would seem as though, while still we live in the flesh, this continues to be so to the last, in some measure. It is true that through fellowship with Christ the self which loathes evil may



come to be more and more our *true* self. Yet in our *actual* self there still lingers some hankering after that which we loathe. How strange a monstrosity! In this horrid doubleness which is the real 'me'? Is my true self the real 'me'? Is my actual self not really 'me' but an enemy and more and more a stranger, an uninvited and hated guest? May I hope and trust that when, at death, I bid goodbye to the flesh, my true self may live on and be admitted to the perfect world, while my actual self perishes?

Perhaps Nature may have a parable for us. In tropical lands one may chance to find, lying on the ground, a complete snake-skin. The snake is not there, but it is still alive and rejoicing in relief from the encumbrance of a skin which had gradually ceased to be part of its true self. The skin which one sees there was once a living part of the snake's anatomy, indispensable to its existence and activity. But when Nature's time drew near for the periodic change of vesture, a new skin began to form under the old, breaking the vital linkage between the latter and the living flesh. Deprived of its nourishment, the old skin could no longer resist the withering heat of the sun, but dried up and became, as it were, merely a closely fitting glove, until the snake irked to be free from what had been veritably part of itself.

Have we a parable here? Is it so with those who, loving the Lord Jesus and receiving His magnanimous trust, learn to loathe the inclinations to evil which still cling to them like a closely fitting garment? As they bask in the rays of His glorious purity, does the sin which doth so easily beset them become an utterly hated, withered encumbrance? If it be so with them, then may it not come to pass that when, at death, they pass into the full blaze of His immediate glorious presence, the withered encumbrance may crack and be slipped off, so that they find themselves, by grace Divine, made fit for that New Jerusalem into which there can enter naught that defileth?

Is that the way of it? We do not know. Sureness of understanding is denied us but not sureness of faith—the faith that those whom Jesus trusts and who trust Him will find themselves made fit, some how and some when, for the Heavenly City. Only we must ever give heed that what we think to be faith is not a facile optimism.

It is against a facile optimism or cheap complacency that the

sombre reasoning of this chapter has been directed. It has been far from its purpose to suggest that fear of perishing ought to be a constant note of the Christian life. For where, then, would be our 'joy and peace in believing'? But that joy, if it is to be fully Christian, must be rejoicing belief in a marvel incredible, and that peace, if it is not to be too cheaply purchased, must be born of faith in a God who works miracles. The argument of this chapter has been concerned with the incredibleness of this marvel and the supernaturalness of this miracle. We have been realising with what remorseless necessity the wages of sin is death, and how baffling of the understanding is God's redemption of the soul from its sinfulness. For those who have felt the scorching holiness with which God loves them assurance of salvation can be no facile optimism. If we preach a Love Divine that is also a Consuming Fire, there is room neither for complacency regarding ourselves nor for leisureliness about our mission of evangelism. Against the certainty that without a miracle of cleansing we and our brethren must perish we shall have constant need of the faith that with God all things are possible.

There is an arresting sermon of Professor Gossip's which culminates in an unforgettable reminiscence. 'Across a waste of years,' he says, 'I well remember Dr. Rainy flinging out a challenge at our communion table. "Do you believe your faith?" he asked. "Do you believe this I am telling you? Do you believe a day is coming, really coming, when you will stand before the throne of God, and the angels will whisper together and say, 'How like Christ he is'?" 'That,' Professor Gossip comments, 'is not easy to believe. And yet not to believe it is blasphemy. For that, not less than that, is what Christ promises. And what Christ promises comes true.'<sup>1</sup> But an incredible belief thus held on to out of impassioned trust is faith, not optimism; and between faith and optimism there is a whole world of difference.

<sup>1</sup> *From the Edge of the Crowd*, p. 12.

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